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"NORMAN, MY HEART'S LOVE, DO NOT TEMPT ME. I CANNOT LISTEN TO YOU!" SAID JASMINE.

MR. CLEMENTSON'S TREACHERY.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

LOVE OR MONEY.

RHODA CHRISTIE was sitting upon a low stool, with her head resting upon her mother's knee, tenderly caressing her hand, when the door opened, and a young, untidy girl entered the room. She was the little maid-of-all-work in the lodging-house where Mrs. Christie and her daughter had apartments, and she and Rhoda were the only people in the world who ever took the trouble to speak a kind word to the over-taxed child; and her face always lighted up with a happy smile when she went into their presence.

"Well, Susan," said Mrs. Christie, "who is the letter for?"

"For Miss Rhoda," answered the girl brightly; and having handed it to her, she left the room without another word.

"Is your letter from Mr. Clementson, dear?" asked Mrs. Christie, a little nervously.

"No, mother mine," returned Rhoda, with a happy laugh. "It is from Douglas FitzGerald. What could Mr. Clementson have to write to me about?"

"A very great deal, dear!" answered Mrs. Christie, with interest; "because he called here to-day and had a long talk with me, and said he would either write to you or come and see you to-night; and, Rhoda, for my sake I hope you will accept his kind and generous offer."

"What do you mean?" asked Rhoda, in astonishment. "Has he found some work for me to do at last? If so, I should not hesitate to accept it, provided it was near enough for me to return to you every evening. Tell me what he said, mother!" and once more she smoothed the thin hand lovingly.

"He did not say he had found any employ-

ment for you, dear child," returned the widow; "but he is anxious to make you his wife, darling. And he has told me if you will only marry him he will settle a thousand a-year on you, and that his home shall be mine too. Is it not good of him?"

"Good of him!" echoed the girl, with an averted face. "No, mother, it is not, for he must know that I do not love him, and that nothing in the world would induce me to accept him."

"Remember how poor we are!" said Mrs. Christie, pathetically; "and how comfortable we should be at Fairlight Hall."

"I do remember we are poor, mother dear," returned Rhoda, softly, "and I must find some means of making you happier; but I should not be increasing your comfort by marrying a man I dislike, for you would be sad, indeed, if you saw me miserable, and I should be so as his wife, for he is a man I shrink from, feeling sure he is thoroughly bad at heart."

"Nonsense, Rhoda," said Mrs. Christie, impatiently. "You must not take such unwarrant-

able dislikes to people. I admire Mr. Clementson very much, and I am vexed that you should refuse so good an offer. I should have thought you had seen enough of poverty since your father died to make you thankful to accept so beautiful a home; but, of course, you must please yourself, and I will not be selfish enough to press you to marry for my sake, although I must confess I should have been glad to have seen us both so comfortably settled for life."

"Mother, dear," answered Rhoda gently, "You loved my poor father. Tell me, would you have married anyone else, even for grandmamma's sake?"

A soft expression passed over the widow's face, and she placed her arm affectionately round her daughter's neck.

"No, child," she answered after a pause. "No one could have persuaded me to have given him up; and if I thought you really cared for any man as I did for him, whatever his position might be, I should advise you to marry him."

"I do love someone, mother mine," returned Rhoda, with a joyous look, "and I wonder you have never guessed my secret!"

"Do you mean Douglas FitzGerald?" asked Mrs. Christie with interest.

"Yes, that is who I mean," said Rhoda, nestling closer to her mother's side, "and, darling, he is coming here to-morrow morning to ask you to let me be his wife!"

"And I suppose you have already promised him to be so before he comes," said Mrs. Christie laughing. "Is not that correct, you naughty child?"

"I am afraid it is, mother," answered Rhoda, laughing too; "but I know you won't mind, darling, for I am so happy."

Mrs. Christie stooped and kissed her fondly.

"I hope you may always be as contented as you are now, my pet!" she answered softly. "Douglas is a nice fellow, and I shall be pleased to acknowledge him as my son; and now run away, for I hear a ring at the bell. It may be Mr. Clementson, and, if so, you would rather avoid him, I know."

"Indeed I would," said Rhoda, jumping up. "And, mother, may I go down to the post-office while he is here?"

"Yes, if you won't be long," returned the widow; "but do not remain out late, as it is already growing dusk;" and, as Rhoda left the room, Mrs. Christie looked at her retreating figure with a sad smile upon her face.

"It is a great disappointment to me," she murmured, half aloud; "but I must not stand in the way of her happiness," and in another second Mr. Clementson had entered the apartment.

He was a tall, thick-set man of fifty years of age, with iron grey hair and short stubbly beard. He had a hard, immovable expression of face, with cold, steel-coloured eyes; but he had a courteous manner when he wished to make himself agreeable, and his position and wealth always made him a welcome guest to parents with marriageable daughters, notwithstanding that he was a widower, with a grown-up daughter of his own, and a nephew that he had adopted when a little boy, and whom he had brought up as his son and heir.

Mrs. Christie had spoken the truth when she said she admired this man of money, and it caused her a great deal of pain to tell him Rhoda had declined to accept his offer; but she did so in a few well-chosen words, saying that at the time she had promised to speak to her on the subject she was unaware that her affections were previously engaged, and begged him to forgive her for any disappointment she had unintentionally caused him.

But Mr. Clementson was not the man to forgive anyone who offended him, and after having scolded the poor little widow nearly out of her senses by a torrent of words about how disgracefully he had been treated, he left the room with a rough "Good evening," and walked indignantly down the stairs, and out of the house.

A few steps down the street he met Rhoda returning from the post-office, and he stopped in

front of her with ill-concealed passion in his usually cold eyes.

"Miss Christie," he said, in a hard voice, "your mother has informed me of your engagement, and I wish you joy in the life of poverty you have chosen for yourself; but you may yet learn to regret having declined to be my wife, for sooner or later I will have my revenge."

And before Rhoda could find words to answer him, he had passed by, and she found herself alone, and, startled by his threatening manner, she hurriedly returned to the lodging-house, and running up to their sitting room she fell weeping into her mother's outstretched arms.

CHAPTER II.

THE COUSINS.

MR. CLEMENTSON returned to Fairlight Hall in anything but an amiable frame of mind, and with very bitter feelings in his heart against Rhoda; and so inconsistent was his nature, that, although a few short hours before he had told himself he loved her, and desired to make her his wife, he then hated her with all the strength of his mind, and was determined not to rest until he had had his revenge for the disappointment she had caused him.

He mused as he thought how much he would enjoy making her suffer; but so far he had not the slightest idea how to injure her, and he was in no hurry whatever to do so. He simply intended to wait and watch until a good opportunity came for him; and having so decided, he retired to his smoking-room to have his usual cigar before joining his daughter and nephew in the drawing-room, where they always passed their evenings singing duets.

Eva, Clementson and Oliver McDonald thoroughly understood each other, and were the best of friends. They had been brought up together since early childhood, and had never had a quarrel in their lives; and it was Mr. Clementson's greatest wish that Eva and his dead sister's son should marry, and thus inherit his property jointly.

Mrs. Clementson had died when Eva was a baby, and up to the time that he met Rhoda Christie, the thought of filling her place had never entered his mind; but not wishing Eva to lack a mother's care, he had persuaded his young widowed sister to bring her three-year-old son and live with him.

As she had been left with very slender means she gladly accepted his offer, and, in return for the devotion she always showed to Eva, Mr. Clementson promised her to be a father to Oliver.

He was brought up as his heir, and he was quite determined that the two children, when they entered man and womanhood, should become united in the bonds of matrimony. And now that Oliver had become twenty-three, and Eva was of age, he began to wonder why he heard of no engagement between them.

He had very broadly hinted his views on the subject to Oliver before he had started for Mrs. Christie's lodgings to receive Rhoda's decision, which he had never doubted for one second would be in his favour; and he thought it would be pleasant for him and Rhoda if the two young people would marry and settle down in a house he intended to provide for them before he brought a fresh mistress to Fairlight Hall, for ever since Mrs. McDonald's death, four years previous, Eva had resigned supreme.

He had no wish to make her or Rhoda feel uncomfortable; on the contrary, he really believed he was making satisfactory arrangements for everyone around him.

He knew he had taken a great fancy to Rhoda, and, although he was old enough to be her father, he thought he could make her happy; and, to ensure her from all anxiety about her mother, he had offered Mrs. Christie a place in his home as long as she lived.

Mr. Clementson and Mr. Christie had been friends for many years, and so he took a great interest in Rhoda and her mother, for the dead man's sake, as well as for their own; and when

he knew they were left in poverty—owing to the loss of nearly all Mr. Christie's money by a bank failure just before his death—Mr. Clementson felt truly sorry for them, and, about six months later, he made up his mind to ask Rhoda to be his wife.

He fully believed she would be only too glad to accept him, particularly as he had stated he would settle a thousand a-year on her for life, which he knew would in no way interfere with what he intended to leave his daughter and Oliver McDonald.

As for them, it never entered his head that they should be so foolish as to so completely go against their own interest as to have a thought apart from each other.

He imagined he was giving Oliver a helping hand when he so clearly hinted it was now the right time for him to propose to his cousin; and he had been decidedly surprised when he saw the look of astonishment on his nephew's face.

Still he was so taken up with his own affairs that the subject soon passed out of his mind, but not so out of Oliver McDonald's; for, although he loved Eva with a true, brotherly affection, he had never once thought of her as his future wife.

It was a decided shock to him when he too plainly saw the meaning of his uncle's words, especially as his heart was entirely set on winning a sweet-looking girl named Ethel Lindsey.

He felt without her for his life's companion he should have very little pleasure in existence, so, in an unusually dreamy mood, he joined his Cousin Eva for their practice; but she, noticing his preoccupied manner, suggested that they should have a quiet talk instead; and for some minutes she chatted on, telling him of all the amusing little incidents that had happened during the day. At length she paused and looked at him, and, taking his hand gently in hers, she asked him if he were in any trouble.

"No, Eva, I am only rather bothered this evening, but there is nothing much the matter," he replied, uneasily.

"Do tell me what it is, Oliver," pleaded the girl. "Rest assured I will help you all I can."

"I know you would, but I hardly like to tell you what is troubling me."

"You hardly like to tell me!" she answered, smiling up at him. "Well, that is good. I thought we had told each other all our worries ever since we could speak. I don't think you need be very much afraid of me, old boy, so confess at once, what is the matter with you?"

"Well, the fact is, Eva," he returned, with a crimson flush spreading over his face, "the fact is, my uncle thinks it is time that I married and settled down."

"You marry!" she answered, going off into peals of laughter. "Nonsense! Father must have been joking you, for who ever do you think would marry a boy like you? Why, I don't believe your monstache can boast of more than a dozen hairs at present. No, no, Oliver; dad was only chaffing you. Depend upon it the girls won't even look at you for the next five years!"

"You're complimentary, certainly," said Oliver McDonald, half annoyed, but with a relieved expression passing over his face at the same time.

"I suppose you mean you would not look at me in the light of a husband!"

"I! Good gracious, no!" she replied, with intense amusement. "When I marry I shall require something awfully too-too in my husband! Only fancy how slow it would be to become engaged to you! Why, you and I are like brother and sister!"

"Of course we are, coz," returned Oliver, laughing at Eva's innocent way of expressing her feelings. "But I am not like a brother to other girls, you know; and a fellow of twenty-three can scarcely be called a boy, even though he may have only twelve hairs in his monstache."

"Poor old chap," she laughed, "did I touch on your tender point! Well, never mind; rub our cat's tail on your lip night and morning, and it will make it grow as if by magic. I can't think of any other suggestion to make!"

"Can't you talk sense, Eva?" asked Oliver impatiently.



"Of course I can," she answered in perfect good humour. "Let me see, you began by telling me you were in trouble because you thought dad wanted you to settle down; but I don't believe he meant it for one second, and if he did, what does it matter! Tell him you don't mean to do it, and there the subject will end."

"If he should say anything to you, Eva, will you stand my friend, and ask him to let both you and me choose our own mates in our own time."

"Of course I will," she answered, turning suddenly grave, as she thought of what her father's wishes might be, although the idea had never struck her before. "I will make him clearly understand my feelings on that point, and now don't worry yourself any more; and if ever you meet a nice girl who can really give you love for love, come and tell me at once, and rest assured I will help you if I can."

"How kind you are, Eva, dear!" replied Oliver gently, and placing his arm around her he gave her a warm kiss on her broad white brow; and at that moment Mr. Clementson entered the room, and smiled as he thought that Oliver had lost no time in carrying out his wishes.

CHAPTER III.

"YOU NEED NO LONGER CONSIDER YOURSELF MY HEIR."

A WEEK passed, and Mr. Clementson grew decidedly uneasy at his nephew's silence; and calling him into his study one morning, he asked him if he had or had not understood the meaning of his words on that previous occasion when they had spoken together.

"I fear I did understand you, uncle," replied Oliver McDonald, quietly, "and I regret that neither Eva nor I feel inclined to carry out your wishes!"

"Do you deliberately tell me that you decline to marry my daughter!" asked Mr. Clementson, with rising passion.

"I should be sorry to put it in such rough language, uncle," returned Oliver, with feeling.

"I can only tell you that Eva and I have been too much brought up as brother and sister to think of each other with any deeper affection; and I hope, for both our sakes, you will say no more on the subject, for I should be truly grieved if Eva was in any way annoyed."

"Am I to understand that you have proposed to Eva, and she has refused you?" demanded Mr. Clementson, hotly.

"No, uncle, I have not asked her to be my wife, and I never could do so, for my whole heart is given to Miss Ethel Lindsey, and she is the only girl in the world that I could marry."

"And does Miss Lindsey know of your wonderful devotion to her?" inquired the elder man, sarcastically.

"Yes, I gained her father's consent to an engagement between us yesterday, and to-day I had intended to ask for yours; and I hope, uncle, you will make no objection to our union, for my whole happiness depends on making her my partner for life."

"Have you told your cousin your wishes?" inquired Mr. Clementson, coldly.

"I have, and she sincerely congratulates me on my good fortune in winning the love of so sweet a woman as Ethel."

"Oh! does she!" returned Mr. Clementson, with a malicious twinkle in his eyes; "and I will give the young lady an opportunity of proving her affection, inasmuch as you need no longer consider yourself my heir! So go and tell her so as soon as you like, and then you will see whether she loves you enough to become the wife of a beggar!"

"If that is your decision, sir, I will go and inform Ethel without delay, and I believe she will wait for me until I can make her a home, and I must find some employment immediately. I only wish that you had not brought me up as an idle man, as I don't know what I am fit for."

"Nothing, I should say," replied Mr. Cle-

mentson, coldly, "but that is your look-out. And now I think our conversation is at an end. You can continue to reside here until you have found some work and some suitable rooms. I don't suppose Eva will object to your doing so."

"What shall I not object to!" asked Eva Clementson, who had just entered the apartment in time to hear the end of her father's speech.

"Mr. Clementson was then saying that perhaps you would not mind my living here a few weeks longer," said Oliver McDonald, a little bitterly.

"What on earth are you both talking about!" said Eva, looking from one to the other in astonishment.

"Simply this, my dear," answered Mr. Clementson, coldly. "Your cousin chooses to disobey me, and therefore I have informed him I will have nothing more to do with him."

"But you did not mean it, father," said Eva, gently. "You could not break all your promises to his poor dead mother!"

For a moment a softened expression passed over the elder man's face, then he tried to set it aside and replied, impatiently,—

"I will not allow you to canvass my actions, Eva. I am quite aware what I promised my sister; but circumstances alter cases, and I can no longer regard Oliver in the light of a son."

"Why not, father dear!" inquired Eva, softly. "The promises to the dead are too sacred to be broken for any light reason, so tell me what Oliver has done to vex you!"

"Mr. Clementson is annoyed with me because I have asked Ethel to be my wife," said Oliver McDonald, with rising colour; "but I still intend to marry her if she will have me as a poor man."

"Of course you do," returned Eva, firmly. "And father is the last man in the world to ask you to break your word to her. It would not be honourable; would it, dad!"

"I decline to be catechised by my own child," said Mr. Clementson, crossly; "so be good enough to leave the room, Eva."

Tears came into the girl's eyes, but she drove them back, and with gentle persistence she took her father's hand in hers, and looked lovingly into his face.

"Father," she said, quietly, "you and Oliver are so very much to me; so, for my sake do not quarrel; and for my sake, dear, let Oliver marry Ethel Lindsey, for he loves her truly, and cannot be happy without her."

"I really thought you had more sense, Eva," replied Mr. Clementson, roughly pushing her away. "For no one's sake will I forgive him; and if you talk any more sentimental rubbish I will disinheritor you too."

"I am sorry we have both vexed you," said Eva, going to her cousin's side, and placing her hand through his arm; "but remember, father, I think Oliver is quite right to be true to the woman he loves, and it is my intention to help him all I can for his mother's sake and his own, and without another word she led Oliver McDonald from the room and gently closed the door."

"Eva, you are a brick!" exclaimed her cousin, as soon as they had entered the "morning room."

"How can I ever repay you for standing my friend!"

"I don't want any payment, Oliver," she answered, affectionately. "I only wish I could really have helped you, but you must forgive father for being cross, and do your best to work hard for a time, and I believe after a few years it will all come right again."

"No, it never can come right, doc," said Oliver dejectedly. "I only hope that Mr. Lindsey won't turn me off too, because I am now a poor man."

"I am certain he won't," said Eva, brightly, "as I am sure he is really fond of you, and very likely he will give you some employment himself. He said the other day how much he wanted to find a trustworthy fellow to oversee his men do their work, instead of looking after them so constantly himself. And I will go with

you at once and persuade him to give the situation to you."

"Will you really, Eva! Then, indeed, you will be helping me," said Oliver, gratefully.

"I want to if I can," she replied, brightly, and a few minutes more she and Oliver McDonald were walking briskly along towards "Greenholm," the residence of Mr. Lindsey and his daughter, and a hour later Eva returned to her home with a lighter heart, for she had obtained Mr. Lindsey's promise to give Oliver the employment he so much needed; and also it was settled that the young people should be married without delay, and that they should settle down at "Greenholm" and take care of the old man, as Ethel could not make up her mind to leave her father on such short notice, especially as she had been his shadow ever since the death of her much-loved mother only two years before.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ONE RULING PASSION OF HIS LIFE.

A MONTH later, and the bells of Lake Crescent Church rang out merrily in honour of the wedding of Ethel Lindsey and Oliver McDonald, and after a few weeks spent at a quiet watering-place, they returned home to take care of Mr. Lindsey, and a right royal welcome the old man gave them.

The three settled down together, and very soon Oliver had the sole management of his father-in-law's business, as he began to feel the work too much for him—as he owned a good-sized pottery, a few miles off from Lake Crescent—and he was glad to escape the fatigue of going to oversee the work.

It did not take Oliver long to learn his duties, and he would return to "Greenholm" every evening with a light and happy heart, feeling really the better for having been usefully employed.

Oliver in no way forgot his Cousin Eva's kindness to him, and whenever he could spare the time he and Ethel used to go and spend an hour or two with her, and try and cheer her lonely life, and very often they persuaded her to return to "Greenholm" with them, and occasionally get her to remain there for two or three days; but that was not very often, as it so increased her father's anger against her for remaining friends with Oliver and his wife that she had to pay dearly for her holiday on her return to Fairlight Hall.

Try however much she might, she could not soften Mr. Clementson's heart towards his dead sister's son; but she remained true to Oliver herself, and firmly told her father she never meant to give up looking upon him as a good and kind brother, for she had had a sister's affection for him ever since she had been a tiny child.

One day, about a year later, Mr. Clementson informed Eva since she had been so persistent in disobeying his wishes he had made up his mind to travel; and that she could either remain at Fairlight Hall with a suitable companion whom he would find for her, or leave her home for ever and take up her abode with Oliver and his wife, and he would then pay her a yearly allowance and remain abroad for an indefinite period.

He gave Eva a week to make up her mind, and during that time Oliver and Ethel persuaded her to settle to go to them, for old Mr. Lindsey had entered his eternal rest, and left his pottery to Oliver and his daughter jointly.

As Ethel often felt very lonely during the day she laughingly told Eva she wanted her to come and be her companion, and also to help her to take care of her six-weeks old boy, whom she declared she could not manage by herself, and who was far too precious to be entrusted to a nurse, however good her character, or old her experience!

So, having told Mr. Clementson her decision, he was not long before he bade Eva farewell, and Fairlight Hall was left in charge of the aged housekeeper and her husband, and Eva was soon comfortably settled at Greenholm, while her

father travelled about from place to place seeking happiness, and finding none.

Mr. Clementson was absolutely a miserable man. Ever since the day that Rhoda Christie had refused to become his wife he had hardened his heart against every living creature, and he so cultivated the longing for revenge against Rhoda that it grew at last to be the one ruling passion of his life; and each day he was more and more determined that he would make her suffer if he could, and one of his objects in going about from one part of the world to the other was to seek for her, as he knew she was married and living abroad with her husband; but he had been unable to trace her farther than Paris, and then he had lost all clue as to her whereabouts.

The truth really was that Rhoda and her mother were so frightened by Mr. Clementson's threatening manner that they had left Lake Crescent as soon as possible, and Douglas Fitzgerald had persuaded Mrs. Christie to allow him to make Rhoda his wife without delay, and go with him at once to Paris, where he had to do some business. And to this Mrs. Christie consented, feeling it better that her daughter should have a proper protector. She also consented to accompany them to France, and make her home with them as long as she lived; but that, poor soul, was only to be for a few short weeks, as she caught a severe chill on the journey, and, in her weak state of health, she was unable to recover from it, so she gradually sank away from low fever, and was laid to rest in a Parisian cemetery.

Rhoda would gladly have taken her to England, to be buried beside the husband she had so devotedly loved; but neither Rhoda nor Douglas Fitzgerald had sufficient means to incur such a heavy expense, and the wish had to be given up. For some time after her mother's death Rhoda was quite inconsolable, so dear had they been to each other. But little by little she grew to lean on Douglas, who, by his great patience and kindness to her, drew her out of her sorrow. And, although she knew she could never cease to mourn for the good mother she had lost, she saw that she ought to be thankful for the love of so tender a guardian, and she made an effort to rouse herself for her husband's sake, and the smiles at length returned to her face, although the dull sadness did not leave her heart.

And so time went by until six months had passed since Mrs. Christie's death, and a place of fortune came to Douglas Fitzgerald, none the less welcome because quite unexpected.

An old maiden aunt of his died, and much to his astonishment, left him an income of three thousand a-year, and expressed a wish that he should take her name, which, as she was his mother's sister, was quite different from his own.

This, of course, he was willing to do, but he saw no reason for telling his acquaintances in Paris the luck that had come to him, so he simply sent in his resignation to the firm he worked for; and when he could finish up his business for them Rhoda and he quietly left for England, where they remained until Miss Armstrong's affairs were settled. Then they made up their minds to travel about and see the world before they settled down to a country life, which they intended to do later on, after they were tired of roaming from place to place, and as Mr. and Mrs. Fitzgerald-Armstrong they left their native soil.

As they were nearly always called Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong by their newly-made friends and acquaintances, it was not wonderful that Mr. Clementson should inquire for them in vain; but his want of success only made him more anxious for revenge, and each day he grew more determined never to rest until he had satisfied his heart's desire.

CHAPTER V.

MR. CLEMENTSON'S REVENGE.

JUST six months later Rhoda and her husband visited Cyprus, taking with them their little infant son, who was the joy and happiness of both their hearts. They simply worshipped the

new child, and, like most parents, they thought there never was such a lovely baby before.

But Rhoda was not strong, and some time after they had arrived at Cyprus she fell ill, and for many weeks she was quite unable to leave the hotel, and when she did how fearfully changed she was.

Every movement denoted intense mental pain—every look was full of anguish, and it was in vain that Mr. Fitzgerald-Armstrong tried to rouse her, for she could not be comforted—for during her illness her nurse and child had suddenly disappeared, and it was supposed that they had been washed out to sea during a severe storm that had arisen without any warning, a few minutes after they had been seen walking near the shore; and as some articles of clothing were discovered after the tide went down that belonged to baby Douglas, there was no doubt as to what his fate had been, and that of his attendant, especially as several other people had lost their lives on the same day; for the hurricane had been so unexpected, and the sudden violence of the sea so great, as to put everyone near in confusion, and there was hardly a person present who was capable of giving any clear or decided evidence; and there was nothing to be done for Rhoda and her husband but to bear the sorrow that had come to them, and to cling to each other for sympathy and support.

One friend and would-be sympathiser they had, whose attentions and kindly words utterly astonished them; for a few days after their arrival at Cyprus they had accidentally met Mr. Clementson, and as he showed so much pleasure at renewing his acquaintance with Rhoda, and was so courteous and nice to them both, they could not find it in their hearts to give him the "cold shoulder," although neither of them were pleased to have the so-called friendship revived after what had passed between Rhoda and himself on the evening she had refused to be his wife.

But a long time had elapsed since then, and Mr. Clementson appeared to be an altered man; and Rhoda felt it would be ungenerous on her part to remember his words against him, believing as she did, they had been spoken when disappointment and anger had made him not answerable for what he had said.

So she and Douglas agreed to be polite to him as long as they were in Cyprus, but to try and avoid giving him their address after they had left, and thus evade him without apparent incivility.

And having thus decided, they saw as little of him as possible, but they were always hospitable to him when he visited them at their hotel.

And when their sorrow came, and Mr. Clementson was so good and thoughtful, they quite blamed themselves for the feeling of mistrust that they ever felt towards him, and they told each other they were doing him a great injustice to harbour unkind ideas about him—for they were only ideas—and neither Rhoda nor her husband could really put into words what they feared from coming in contact with him, especially as nothing could exceed his show of good-nature towards them.

On the day of the storm Douglas Armstrong, seeing that his wife was very much better than she had been for many weeks, left her for a few hours to go and see a friend of his, who, he heard, was staying for a short time about ten miles distance from their present abode.

As it was a glorious morning he determined to walk all the way, and set out on his little journey with a light heart.

He met Mr. Clementson soon after he had left the hotel, and to avoid his trying to accompany him he told him where he was going, and after a short conversation the two men bade each other adieu; and early in the afternoon Mr. Clementson wended his way towards the "Hôtel Métropole" to keep Rhoda company during her husband's absence.

On the road he came across baby Douglas and his young nurse, and he paused to speak to them, and then passed on with an evil look upon his face.

"Her child!" he muttered, with his hands clenched, "and she is happy, but it shall not

last. No, no! Sooner or later I will make her suffer; but I must wait my time to avoid suspicion! At present I must be her friend!"

And he smiled as he thought how cleverly he was acting his part; and a minute or two later he was sitting beside Rhoda, listening with deep interest to her account of the latter days of her mother's life, and expressing great regret that he had been unable to show her any attention during her last illness.

Just as Rhoda's heart was softening under the influence of his kind words the hurricane suddenly began, and, fearing for her child's safety, she begged him to try and help her find out where her nurse had gone, so as to get them home as quickly as possible.

Mr. Clementson lost no time in obeying her wishes, only persuading her, as she had not been out since her illness, to remain quietly indoors, promising to do his utmost to find her boy, and to restore him to her without delay.

Mr. Clementson remembered where he had met them, and guessed what route the nurse had taken, but he ordered several of the servants to go in opposite directions, in case he was mistaken. Then he hurriedly made his way out of sight, with bitter and contending passions working in his breast.

For three hours the storm raged with intense violence, and self-preservation seemed to be the one thing everybody thought of; but even that was no easy matter, for there was danger everywhere—by the sea, and on land; for many of the smaller houses were blown down, and the people were rushing for shelter to all the larger buildings, pushing and hustling each other as they went, as if other lives were not as precious as their own.

All the while Rhoda stood by the window watching for her child, wringing her hands in silent agony, and praying that no harm might come to him or to her husband, who might, for aught she knew, be out in the storm too.

The hotel servants returned one by one, but they brought her no good news; and last of all Mr. Clementson went to her with an expression of well-feigned pity on his usually hard face, and told her with great gentleness that he feared her nurse and child had been washed out to sea, as he had made every inquiry. All he could hear of them was that they had been walking on the shore when the storm first began, but that no one had noticed them since; and although he had been searching for them for nearly three hours he had been unable to find a trace of them.

Rhoda listened to his account with tearless eyes, becoming paler every second; and at length, with a moan, she sank senseless to the ground. And when Douglas Armstrong came back to the hotel an hour later he found her still unconscious, although Mr. Clementson had sent for two medical men, and had seen that everything had been done that was possible to think of. He had also despatched a conveyance to fetch Douglas Armstrong, and it had met him by the way; and when he got to the "Hôtel Métropole" Mr. Clementson led him into his private sitting-room and told him all that had occurred, and after clasping his hand with tender sympathy, he left him to go and attend to his wife, and promised to continue his search for the lost child, and return in the evening to tell him if he had had any success.

At nightfall he went, and said a baby's cloak had been picked up after the tide had receded, with a great many other things belonging to different people, and he felt sure the cloak had been the one worn by little Douglas; and he advised Mr. Armstrong to go to the place where they were all on view, and see if he could identify it.

Rhoda was then asleep with a trained nurse watching her, so Douglas Armstrong allowed Mr. Clementson to take him without delay and show him the cloak, and he was not long in recognising it as being the one his child had worn. And after having made many more inquiries after the missing baby and nurse he returned to the hotel again as a man without hope, and when days had passed into weeks, and nothing had been heard

of the lost pair, he felt perfectly convinced as to what had been their sad fate.

He did his best to make Rhoda rouse herself for his sake, and the two broken-hearted parents lent on each other for support, making their trouble draw them ever closer together, although for a time Rhoda's grief seemed almost beyond the reach of human sympathy; and Mr. Clementson, watching her mental anguish, felt that however much she loved her husband she was utterly unhappy, and seeing her misery more than contented him. He gave a smile of deep satisfaction that he had had his revenge at last!

CHAPTER VI.

THE WANDERER'S RETURN.

VERY soon after Eva Clementson went to live with Oliver McDonald and his nice young wife, she met the love of her life, and she was not long in discovering the fact, or in seeing that Horace Wallpole loved her with all his heart; and before he had known her many weeks he had openly declared his affection for her, and made her promise to be his wife as soon as he could prepare a suitable home for her to live in.

He wrote to Mr. Clementson and asked his consent to his marrying Eva; and as Horace was the only son of a Colonel in the army who had been killed in action a short time before, and had left him very well provided for, Mr. Clementson made no objections to the match, and wrote to Eva to wish her all happiness, and even went so far as to regret that he would not be in England when she was married.

He could have been had he really desired it, but he had so given himself up to his own pleasure and comfort that he cared not to set his plans on one side for any one—not even his own daughter; and he considered he had done all that could be expected of him when he wrote and gave her his good wishes.

Eva answered his letter, and promised to write and tell him when she became Horace's wife; and she kept her word, and gave him a full description of her wedding, and of the pretty home her husband had prepared for her in a village called Silverdale, a few miles from Lake Crescent.

So that she was not divided from her cousins at Greenholme, who had been so kind and attentive to her; and after a couple of months Eva received a note from her father to say his movements were so uncertain that it was quite impossible to keep her cognisant of his address, so he had made up his mind to give up all correspondence for some time, and that he had ordered his solicitors to send her the yearly allowance he had undertaken to make her, so that she was to see that she received the amount due to her every quarter day; and from the time she received that letter Eva never heard again from her father for twenty-three years, when he wrote to tell her he intended to return to England and settle down at Fairlight Hall, which was to be thoroughly restored before his advent.

Mr. Clementson also told her that he had married again, twenty-two years before, and that he was bringing his son, Norman, who was just coming of age, to England with him, so that he could take up his position as heir to the Fairlight estate.

Mr. Clementson also told Eva that his wife had died at Norman's birth, but that his son had been a great pleasure to him, and he hoped that she would find that she could give him a sister's welcome; and that although he had neglected her for so many years, he begged her to be good to him in his old age, as he did not feel that he had much longer to live.

Eva, ever a generous-hearted woman, forgave him all the past at once, and on the afternoon that he was expected home she and her husband went to Fairlight Hall to give the travellers a warm reception, and they took with them their only daughter, Jasmine, who was a sweet and lovely girl, nineteen years of age.

The meeting passed off in a very friendly manner, for Mr. Clementson was much taken with his son-in-law, and seemed anxious to make

Horace like him in return, while to Eva he was really affectionate; and she, seeing how old and careworn he looked, lovingly promised to do her best to be a comfort to him in the declining years of his life.

As for Norman and Jasmine they seemed mutually delighted with each other; and after they became well acquainted, there was never a day that Norman did not fetch her to early dinner at Fairlight Hall, and take her home when it became dusk, and between them they made Mr. Clementson's old age a very bright one.

He seemed to become soft and different when he was in their presence, although a troubled look would occasionally pass over his face as he watched the growing intimacy between them; then with an effort he would rouse himself, and laughingly tell Norman not to fall in love with his own niece; and Norman and Jasmine would join in his joke, with little thought of how much sorrow was in store for them later on.

Oliver McDonald and his wife had both died a year before Mr. Clementson had thought of returning to England, and it was a real trouble to the old man that he had never been reconciled to his nephew before he had passed away.

He heard of his death from his solicitor, who always acquainted him with English news; and it was after hearing of Oliver's decease that he made up his mind to return to Fairlight Hall, and let Norman take his place as heir to the estate, which he never liked to do during the lifetime of his sister's son; for although he had so seriously quarrelled with him, and had always been too proud to make the first advance of friendship, he never forgot how fond they had been of each other, or the promises he had made to Oliver's dead mother. Remembering them, he hesitated to let even Norman fill his place, and put off arranging his affairs year after year, unable to decide how to be just to all he loved; after he should have joined the great majority, knowing that he had injured them all more or less by his unkind conduct and revengeful temper.

CHAPTER VII.

"NO ONE MUST KNOW THE SORROW OF OUR LIVES."

AFTER the death of Oliver McDonald and his gentle wife, their only son Reginald felt so thoroughly upset by the loss he had sustained that he determined to travel abroad for some years before he settled down to his life's work. So he hired a trustworthy man to manage the Potters his father had bequeathed him, and took a passage to Australia as quickly as possible.

There was only one reason that he regretted leaving England, and that was, it pained him to say good-bye to his cousin Jasmine—she had been so very much to him ever since she was a tiny child. And when she began to approach womanhood he knew it was no ordinary affection that he felt for her, but one that would ripen into deep and lasting love.

Still when he left her to take his much-needed change, he decided to wait till his return to ask her to be his wife, feeling that she was too young then to be bound by any promises, especially as he was not at all sure that she cared for him in return in any serious light, and he hoped that she would grow fonder of him during his absence, and feel the need of his daily attentions.

For a long while she missed him greatly, for he had been her slave from earliest boyhood; but when Norman Clementson came to Fairlight Hall he more than filled his place, for Norman was quite her ideal. He was what her heart had pictured as perfect among men, and whenever she was with him she was intensely happy. Away from his side she became restless, and uncertain to those around her—sometimes bright and loving, and at others so sad and depressed that her mother grew quite anxious about her; but knowing the impossibility of her marrying her own uncle, it did not enter her head that she could have any deep affection for him, and, remembering how devoted Reginald had always

been to Jasmine, Mrs. Wallpole thought she must be fretting about him.

She wrote him a chatty letter, and told him what a nervous state his cousin was in, and ended by saying how glad she should be when he returned to England to take care of her again; and Mrs. Wallpole, thinking she had done a kindly act, never mentioned the subject to Jasmine at all. And when four months later, she received an answer from Reginald McDonald to say he would be at Lake Crescent in about a week, she determined to keep the secret to herself, and give her daughter a happy surprise. Happy she never doubted it would be, for Reginald had openly stated in his letter that his affection for Jasmine was unaltered, and he hoped that the future would bring much happiness to them all.

In the meantime things were not standing still between Norman Clementson and his niece. Each day they grew more and more dear to one another—each day the power of love seemed to draw them closer together; and feeling this they grew nervous and constrained in each other's presence, hardly speaking when alone, and when in the company of their relations talking only in the general conversation, until Jasmine felt she could bear it no longer, and often pleaded a headache as an excuse to remain at home instead of paying her usual visits to her grandfather's, until Mrs. Wallpole felt thoroughly convinced that it was her cousin Reginald that she was fretting for, and she anxiously waited for his return.

At last he arrived; and an hour after he had taken his luggage to "Greenholm," he made his way to the little village of Silverdale with a light heart, wondering what sort of a welcome Jasmine would give him, and what she would say to him when he asked her to be his wife.

Not wishing to be detained by meeting his old acquaintances by the road he sprang over a stile, and walked swiftly across some meadows, and then turned into an old wood which led right up to the little silver river called the "Silver Streak," and divided the village of Silverdale from that of Lake Crescent; and in summer the path through the wood was always considered a nearer way, and the river could be crossed by some pieces of stone which the villagers had put in for the purpose; but in winter the stream was impassable, for it became swelled and rough, and it was only safe to go over it by the large bridge that had been erected along the high road to connect the two places.

But on the day that Reginald McDonald was going to seek his cousin the Silver Streak was perfectly calm and low, and as it was a scorching August day he passed occasionally to enjoy the cool breeze that from time to time rustled among the boughs of the thickly-studded trees.

It was while standing all hidden by the branches of a half-fallen oak that he saw two figures advancing slowly towards him, and presently they stopped quite close to where he was, and the words he heard them uttering rooted him to the ground as if bound by a spell; and he saw that one of the speakers was his cousin Jasmine, and that she was looking up at her companion with a half-pleading, wholly loving expression upon her lovely face.

"Jasmine! Jasmine, my darling!" said Norman Clementson. "I cannot live without you! What is the world's opinion worth when the happiness of our two lives is at stake! Oh, my love! my love! come to me! Let us defy the cold, calculating rules of society, and be married at once, and go abroad. It would be held legal in many places, if not in England. And what is that to us! Before Heaven you would be my loved and honoured wife; and I will swear to be true to you until my life's end!"

"Norman, my heart's love! pray—pray do not tempt me!" returned Jasmine. "I cannot, dare not, listen to you! What would my parents feel when they knew that I had deserted them for one who should, by all the laws of our religion, be nothing but a near and dear relation! No, no, Norman! Do not press me, I entreat you! We have both been weak, but we must not be wicked too! Indeed we must not!"

"Jasmine, you do not love me,"

not speak in such a way!" said Norman, half reproachfully.

"Not love you!" she echoed, with tearful eyes. "I love you with my whole soul, Norman, and I promise you no other man shall ever call me wife; but I cannot be that to you, darling! I could not let you leave the path of honour for my sake!—no, not if it kills me to live apart from you! And now, dear love, go home, and leave me alone for a little while! I could not face mother just yet, for she would soon see I was in trouble, and try and comfort me; and I could not bear it, for I dare not tell even her our terrible secret! Norman, it must be inviolate between us; no one must know the sorrow of our lives!"

"You are right, Jasmine," returned Norman Clementson, in a weary voice; "no one must know; and it will be better if we do not meet again just yet. I could not bear it, child, so good-bye," and, clasping her in his arms, he gave her one long, passionate embrace.

Then, without another word, he left her alone; and, passing along the path as one in a dream, he at length entered the main road. Rounding himself with a supreme effort he walked to Fairlight Hall.

Arriving there, he went straight to his own room, and locked the door. Sinking into an easy chair, he buried his face in his hands.

"Oh, Jasmine, my love! my love!" he moaned. "I cannot live here without you! I shall go away!" and before the next morning dawned Norman Clementson had left his father's house without mentioning to anyone his intended plans.

CHAPTER VIII.

"YES, I WILL BE SILENT, JASMINE."

For some seconds Reginald McDonald stood as if rooted to the ground, listening to the lovers against his will; then, with a terrible effort, he moved away noiselessly, as as not to disturb them, feeling, however his cousin might decide, it was not in his power to interfere, as he certainly had no right to dictate to her in any way.

He felt an utter loneliness come over him. He blamed himself again and again for not having remained in England.

No unkind thought towards Jasmine entered his mind. He knew that he had left her free, and he could not blame her for giving her love to another, although his own heart was craving for it with almost unbearable pain.

A great weariness came over him, and he sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree to rest, and remained there in deep thought until he was roused by Norman Clementson passing along the wooded path a few yards from where he was sitting.

The look of mental anguish on Norman's face as he walked by made Reginald McDonald spring to his feet, with a wild feeling of hope rising in his breast.

"Surely—surely she must have refused his love; and yet how could I have mistaken the tender look in her eyes, as she listened to his passionate pleading!" he murmured, half aloud.

Then he turned round quickly, and walked with hurried steps to try and find Jasmine before she left the wood. But he had not far to go, for he found her lying insensible under the very tree where he had seen her talking to his rival.

Bending down, he felt her pulse, and uttered a sigh of relief to find it was still beating; for Jasmine was looking so ashen-white that at first he feared that she was dead; but, discovering that she was living, he knelt down beside her on the green sward; and, after loosening the tight collar that was around her neck, he took the small flask of brandy that he always carried in his pocket in case of accidents, and poured some gently into her mouth. By degrees she perspired her to swallow it, and at last she opened her eyes, and regarded him with an almost frightened expression of face.

"Well, Jasmine," he said, softly, "are you feeling better? I have returned just in time to

nurse you, you see," and he raised her into a sitting posture as he spoke.

"Reginald, where have you come from?" asked Jasmine. "I had no idea you were in England."

"Had you not? And yet I wrote and told Mrs. Wallpole of my advent; but perhaps she never received my letter."

"Perhaps not, for she never mentioned it," said Jasmine, dreamily.

"But now that I am here, have you no words of welcome for me, Jasmine? Remember how much we were to each other before I went abroad," said Reginald McDonald, in a pleading voice.

"I remember, Rex," she replied, trying to smile at him, "and I am very pleased to see you again; but tell me, dear, how long have you been in the wood? I thought that—that I was quite alone!"

"I have been here some time, little woman," he answered kindly, "and I must confess to have been an unwilling listener to a part of your conversation with your friend who has just left you. But you need not look so troubled, dear, for if you wish it I will keep your secret."

"Thank you, Rex," said Jasmine, in a relieved tone of voice. "I am sorry you should have seen us together; but I can trust you and rely upon your silence, for I do not wish my parents to know anything about my private affairs. It would only distress them."

"Surely, little Jasmine, it would be better to give your mother your confidence if you have any sorrow!" said Reginald McDonald, gravely.

"She was ever so kind and sympathetic to you on all occasions, and I ask you, as a favour, to go to her now and tell her all that is in your heart; for Jasmine, dear, from what I heard that fellow say to you I am afraid he was not trying to lead you down a right path. I fear your future, if you have no wiser head than your own to help and advise you."

"Reginald," replied Jasmine, somewhat haughtily, "I am quite old enough to decide for myself about what is right or wrong. Rest assured I shall never bring disgrace upon my name, nor will the gentleman you saw me talking to. You have promised me to be silent, and I shall rely upon your honour to be so."

"Yes, I will be silent, Jasmine," returned Reginald McDonald, sadly; "but tell me one thing before I leave you. Do you love that man?"

"With all my heart and soul," replied Jasmine fervently; "but there are reasons why we can be nothing more to each other than we are already."

"My little cousin," said Reginald McDonald, with intense feeling, "remember how much we were to one another before I left England; and believe me, sweet girl, when I tell you that you are as dear to my heart now as you were then. I ask you to make a friend of me. Give me your confidence, Jasmine, if you refuse to give it to your mother for fear of paining her. You say you love that fellow with all your heart and soul, then why don't you have an open engagement and marry him later on with your parent's consent? Tell me your secret, and, if possible, I will help you to be happy with the man of your choice."

"I will trust you, Cousin Rex," said Jasmine, clasping his outstretched hand warmly; "but it is quite impossible for you to assist me, for Norman Clementson, who is the only being in the world I could ever care for, is my uncle, so that, I think, is reason enough for keeping us apart."

"Your uncle!" repeated Reginald McDonald, gravely. "Poor little Jasmine! Then I cannot help you after all, although I would sacrifice my very life to make you happy."

CHAPTER IX.

"HE MUST BE FOUND WITHOUT DELAY."

REGINALD McDONALD remained a long time in the wood talking to Jasmine, and then he walked

with her as far as her father's gate and left her there, feeling too much upset to talk to her parents should they be at home; for although he had generously put his own wishes on one side to try and comfort his cousin in her sorrow, he knew that he loved her with a deep and true affection, and that no other woman in the world could ever fill her place in his heart. But he was determined that he would bear his disappointment bravely for Jasmine's sake, and never even tell her how he longed to make her his wife, for he knew it would only add to her own trouble to see him suffer so; and as she had openly told him how much she cared for Norman Clementson, he made up his mind to be a true friend to her, and do his best to comfort her and make her life a bright one.

So the following morning he went over to Silverdale, and Mr. and Mrs. Wallpole gave him a warm welcome. The blush which arose on Jasmine's face as they exchanged greetings, convinced her parents that their surmises concerning the cousins had been correct; and they hoped, now that Reginald had returned, that Jasmine's health would improve, and that she would soon be her old cheerful self again.

They were talking about Reginald's unexpected appearance (which Mrs. Wallpole laughingly confessed she had known of for some time, but had wished to give them all a pleasant surprise) when a carriage drove hurriedly up to the hall door, and Mr. Clementson was announced. He was looking pale and agitated, and taking his daughter by the hand, he asked her in a trembling voice if she had seen Norman, as he had deserted his home, and his bed had not been slept in the night before.

"Where can he have gone?" said Eva and her husband together.

"He has not been here for several days, and I don't think Jasmine has seen him either," continued Mrs. Wallpole, turning to her daughter questioningly.

"I saw him yesterday," answered the girl, nervously, "but he did not tell me he was going away although he said something about my not seeing him again just yet; but I did not realise that he intended to leave home."

"Did he give any reason for saying he should not come and see you?" asked Mr. Clementson, regarding her keenly.

"He said nothing that I can repeat, grandfather," replied Jasmine, with tears in her eyes.

"Nothing that you can repeat, child!" echoed Mr. Clementson, in a startled voice. "For Heaven's sake tell me if he knew—if he had discovered anything that troubled his mind, or made him unhappy! Keep nothing back, I entreat you."

"I think he was in trouble," said Jasmine, scarcely above a whisper, "but it is not in my power to tell you his secret."

"His secret! Then he has found out all!" said Mr. Clementson, brokenly, "and he has deserted me in my old age as a punishment for my sin," and in another second he had fallen to the ground, and lay there in a senseless state.

"Oh, father! what is the matter with you!" said Eva, kneeling down beside his prostrate form, and raising his head gently.

"Jasmine, dear, if you know what your grandfather means tell us at once!" said Mr. Wallpole, sternly.

"I cannot understand his words at all, father," replied the girl, in a bewildered tone of voice. "They are as mysterious to me as they can possibly be to you."

"Let me help you lift Mr. Clementson on to the sofa," said Reginald McDonald to Mr. Wallpole. "He has evidently something troubling his mind, and it has been too much for him. The sooner the doctor is fetched the better. I will jump into the old man's carriage, and bring Mr. Carter back with me;" and having laid Mr. Clementson on the couch he hurried out of the room, leaving the others to use such restoratives as they could think of; but they could not get him round at all.

And when Mr. Carter arrived he looked very grave, and pronounced it to be a very serious

attack of syncope, and ordered him to bed without delay.

Mr. Wallpole and Reginald McDonald carried Mr. Clementson up to the spare room (which happened to be in perfect readiness, as they were expecting some visitors that evening to remain and sleep), and with the doctor's help he was soon undressed, and by the time he was in bed Mrs. Wallpole and Jasmine had the mustard plasters made, which were put on immediately; and, after that, neither Mr. Carter nor Mrs. Wallpole left his side for many hours, waiting on him continually, till at last his consciousness returned, and he looked round the room with a troubled expression on his face.

"Norman," he whispered. "Where is he? I must see him before I die."

"Do not talk of dying, father," said Eva, sadly. "You must live for all our sakes."

"You are worth a dozen dead men yet," said Mr. Carter, cheerily; "and if you keep quite quiet, I hope you will feel much better to-morrow."

"I shall never be much better again," returned Mr. Clementson, gravely; "and I cannot rest until I have seen Norman, for I have a great deal to say to him."

"Then we will send for him at once," said the doctor, kindly. "Mrs. Wallpole, I will leave it to you to let your brother know his father wishes to have a chat with him, and I will go and call on my other patients, as I expect they will think I have deserted them," and with a parting hand-clasp with Mr. Clementson he left the room, followed by Eva Wallpole.

"How do you really think my father is?" she inquired anxiously, as soon as they were alone.

"While there is life there is hope," replied Mr. Carter, solemnly; "but I fear he will never recover, and at his age if he had another attack it might be fatal. Therefore he must have constant attention day and night, and, above all things, he must be kept perfectly quiet. He must not be allowed to worry or excite himself in any way."

"I will not leave him," replied Mrs. Wallpole decidedly; "but I cannot prevent his worrying himself, because he evidently wishes to see Norman, and we do not know what has become of him, for he went away from home early this morning, and I fear he has left us no address."

"That is very unfortunate," replied Mr. Carter, seriously, "but he must be found without delay," and bidding adieu to Mrs. Wallpole he left the house in silence.

CHAPTER X.

"I HAVE DECEIVED YOU ALL YOUR LIFE."

A WEEK later, as Norman Clementson was sitting in the coffee-room of a fashionable French hotel, he was surprised to see a pressing advertisement for him to return to Fairlight Hall in the "agony column" of the *Times*, and he read it again and again before he could realize he was the person it was intended for; but the sentence was plainly written, and it stated that his father was dying, and wished to see him; and before many hours had passed Norman was again on English soil, and he made his way as fast as he could to the home that he had deserted only a few days before.

He felt utterly miserable during his journey, for his father was more than dear to him; although at the first rush of sorrow about Jasmine he had forgotten all else, and had foolishly thought to find solace in a foreign land, where he decided to go as soon as he could get a steamer to take him, and where he hoped by living a life of solitude among strangers he would in time learn to forget. But now he saw his conduct in its true light, and he knew he had acted altogether wrongly, and he bitterly regretted the fact. He felt that, dearly as he loved Jasmine, it had been very selfish of him to try and persuade her to leave the path of honour for his sake, and then, because she had chosen to do what was right, to leave her alone to bear her sorrow in the best way she could. And, above everything, he blamed himself for deserting his father in his old age, instead of remaining to be a comfort and

support to him in his last days; and the thought would come to his mind that if he had stayed at home Mr. Clementson might not have been taken ill, as he had known for a long while that he had been suffering from a delicate heart, and that he should not be worried on any subject.

So with very sad feelings he arrived at Fairlight Hall to find that his father was not there, but at Silverdale; and ordering the groom to get the dog-cart ready for him as quickly as possible, in less than half-an-hour he was at his sister's house, and Jasmine hearing his voice, ran to the door to meet him.

"Oh, Norman!" she said excitedly, "I am so thankful you have come! Poor grandfather asks for you every few minutes, and we have been so distressed at not being able to find you!"

"I am so sorry, darling!" he whispered back taking her hand tenderly in his own; "and I hope you will all forgive me. But tell me one thing, do they know the reason I went away?"

"No, dear!" replied Jasmine, growing rosy red. "I have told them nothing, but I have much to say to you by-and-by, although I must not keep you with me now, for every second is important, so come upstairs at once."

"Poor old father!" said Norman, with feeling. "I am, indeed, grieved he is so ill." And he followed her, without another word, to the sick man's room, where he found Eva Wallpole and Reginald McDonald sitting by the bedside.

"Mother, here is Norman!" said Jasmine, opening the door softly.

"Norman," repeated Mr. Clementson, starting up. "Oh! where is he? Let me see him before I—"

"Here I am, father," said the young man brokenly. "Have you, indeed, a welcome for me after the unkind way I have treated you? Can you really forgive me?" and bending down he reverently kissed his father's brow, then turned away to hide his emotion; but Mr. Clementson detained him by laying his feeble hand upon his arm.

"Norman," he said, in a choking voice, "it is you who have to forgive—not I—for I have wronged you from childhood—have deceived you all your life."

"Nonsense," replied Norman gently. "You have ever been a good and indulgent parent to me, and it is only because you are not well, dear old father, that your mind is troubled with such strange ideas."

"Would to Heaven that it was so," said Mr. Clementson, solemnly.

"Poor father!" said Norman, turning to Mrs. Wallpole for the first time, and giving her an affectionate embrace; and then extending his hand to Reginald, as Jasmine whispered who he was. "Poor father, how sad it is he should have such a terrible delusion! How long has it lasted, Eva?"

"All through his illness, I fear," replied Mrs. Wallpole sadly. "I wish we could assure him there is no truth in his imaginations."

"But there is truth in them," cried the sick man excitedly. "I am not delirious, as you seem to think I am. So much the pity, for when the delirium had passed I should find rest, and die in peace. As it is, I shall neither find peace here nor hereafter."

"Father, tell me what is in your heart," said Norman, putting his arm around his wasted form. "Tell me all your sorrow, dear old man, and let me help you bear it!"

"Oh! my boy, my boy!" said Mr. Clementson, with deep emotion, "no words could tell you how I love you—aye, and have loved you for years and years. Yet, when you know the truth, you will turn from me with repulsion, as if I were some deadly serpent that would poison you to come in contact with. Oh! I cannot, cannot tell you," and he sobbed aloud.

"Perhaps if I go away Mr. Clementson will feel that he can speak more freely," said Reginald McDonald to Mrs. Wallpole, rising to leave the room.

"No, no, sit down again!" said Mr. Clementson, earnestly. "I wish you all to hear how anyone can be led from sin to sin by giving way to revengeful feelings; and I pray that

watching the misery of my last hours may teach you to forgive every one who injures and annoys you, without seeking to be revenged upon them because they have made you so suffer."

"Are you thinking of poor Oliver, father?" asked Eva Wallpole, sadly. "If so, let me tell you he never said an unkind word about you, and when he was dying he spoke of you with much affection."

"Did he?" returned Mr. Clementson, feebly. "I am glad of that, for I was very unjust to him, poor fellow! But he was not the only being I injured. I only wish it was, Norman, my boy. It is you—you and your parents that I have the most cruelly wronged; and now that I am leaving this world I feel and know what a sinner I have been!"

"Father, what do you mean?" said Norman, quietly.

"Father!" repeated Mr. Clementson, almost wildly. "Norman, Norman, you must not call me that, for you—you are not my son!"

"Not your son!" echoed Norman, in dismay. "Oh! you must be dreaming, indeed you must; for you have ever been a father to me; and I, well, if I do not belong to you, can you explain whose son I am?"

"Yes!" returned Mr. Clementson sinking back on his pillow exhausted. "Your rightful name is Douglas, and you are the son of Douglas and Rhoda FitzGerald-Armstrong."

"Good Heavens!" said Reginald McDonald, springing up. "Is it possible you can mean what you say?"

"Quite," returned the old man, faintly, "and if I could only restore them their boy I might die happy after all."

"I will endeavour to find them for you," replied Reginald, excitedly, and left the room before anyone could question him further.

"Father," said Norman, gently, "there is evidently some mystery connected with me, and all I can say is I hope it may be cleared up, and that your poor mind may be set at rest, for I cannot believe you capable of any very wrong action; and if you have been, I can forgive you freely, because, dearly as I care for you, it would make me the happiest man in England to find I was not your son!"

"What are you talking about?" asked Mrs. Wallpole, rousing herself at his strange words, and trying to subdue the flood of tears that she was overcome with.

"I mean," said Norman, "if I am not the dear old fellow's son, I am not your daughter's uncle, and if I am no relation to her, there is no reason that I should not ask you to allow me to make her my wife, for I love her with all my soul!"

"You do!" said Mrs. Wallpole, in astonishment. "And what does Jasmine say, or have you not told her?" and she turned to look at Jasmine as she spoke.

"I say, mother, that if Norman is my uncle I will never marry any other; but I will remain single all my life!"

"Thank Heaven that I can make you happy then!" said Mr. Clementson, with an effort. "Jasmine, come here! and Norman—you will always be Norman to me;" he added, with a faint smile—"come here too. There, that is right," as he clasped the hands of the two young people together. "Now, if Eva has no objection to the match, you can be married as soon as you like, for you are not even connections to each other, and I hope you will both be blessed in your future lives!"

And before they could answer him he had fallen back insensible, and for some time they all thought that he was dead—so cold and still he lay upon his snow-white bed.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. CLEMENTSON'S CONFESSION.

It was many hours before Mr. Clementson rallied; and when he did so he showed symptoms of great exhaustion, and his voice was intensely feeble. His eyes, as he gazed round the room, had an anxious and nervous expression in them;

and, looking at Norman, he signalled for him to come to his side.

"Norman," he said, "do your best to find your parents, and tell them how deeply I regret having taken you away from them, although, as far as I am concerned, you have brightened and cheered my life!"

"Did I not go to you with their consent?" inquired Norman, otherwise Douglas Armstrong.

"No, my boy. I wanted to be revenged upon your mother because, at some former time, she had refused to be my wife. So when I saw how happy she was with your father, and how she loved you too, I took you away during a violent storm, and pretended you were drowned. So cleverly did I manage it that they never guessed the truth; and I—I professed to be their friend and dearest sympathiser in their sorrow. And it was sorrow, too; for your poor mother utterly broke down, and for some time her life was despaired of, and that was my triumph. Oh! I remember how I gloried in her misery!"

"Pater, don't talk like that!" said Douglas Armstrong, sadly. "If what you say be true, I am sure you must have been very unhappy ever since."

"Not at first," answered Mr. Clementson, in an agitated voice; "but of late years I have bitterly regretted my conduct, although I never could make up my mind to find your parents, and acknowledge my wickedness, for there is a true saying, 'Conscience makes cowards of us all,' and mine, certainly, made one of me; for, although your mother's face has quite haunted me, I have not had the pluck to find her and hear the words of reproach which, doubtless, she would utter!"

"I can't help feeling sorry for you, pater," said Douglas Armstrong, gently, "and for my parents, too, for I fear they must have been very upset, from what you say; but we may be able to find them; and if so, you will have the satisfaction of restoring me to them, and I will do my best to make them a good son, and render their old age happy."

"I hope so," replied Mr. Clementson, with emotion. "If you are as dutiful to them as you have always been to me, they will soon learn to love you dearly. But you must not expect to see your parents elderly people, for they can only be a little over forty now, as they both married very early in life."

"I am so glad!" said Douglas Armstrong, brightly, "for I shall delight in having a young mother! But how are they going to identify me? They may not believe I am their son at all!"

"I think they will remember the scar you have on your left arm," replied Mr. Clementson, with an effort; "and in the tin box which I always keep locked up in my wardrobe you will find all the things you wore on the day I took you away. Your mother is sure to recognise them, for they are marked in her own handwriting."

"Pater," said Douglas Armstrong, "will it tire you very much to tell me how you managed to take me from my parents without their discovering your plot against them?"

"I will try and relate the story to you, as it is right that you should know it," returned Mr. Clementson, "although I must cut it as short as possible, for I feel I am losing strength rapidly. The facts of the case are simply these: I was determined to have my revenge on your mother for refusing to be my wife; and seeing her devotion to you, I felt I could not find a better way of making her suffer than by parting you from her."

"For weeks I waited for a suitable opportunity, and at last one came. We were staying at Cyprus, where we had accidentally met. One day, while I was sitting with your mother in her drawing-room at the hotel where they were residing, a fearful storm began. She grew very anxious about you, as you were out with your nurse, and I told her I would go and try and find you. I went; and as I had seen your maid a short time before taking you down the road that led to the sea, I took the same route. I quickly discovered you both trying to get shelter from the storm, which was

terrible. It was the most awful hurricane that had ever been known there, and people were struggling to save themselves without one thought of helping those around them, so it was not wonderful that I could take you both away with me unnoticed."

"Before that day I had purposely made friends with your nurse, and I found her to be an innocent, trustful sort of girl, who could be easily led away and managed; and being very frightened at the storm I had little difficulty in persuading her to trust to my instructions. Taking her to an unfrequented part we took shelter in an empty house, and while there I bribed her to leave your parents and help me to abduct you."

"At first she would not listen to me, telling me it would break your mother's heart to lose you. But that argument only made me the more anxious to carry out my horrible plot. So I raised the sum I had offered her, and the temptation was too great, and she consented to do as I wished, and promised to remain in my service to take care of you; which she did, poor girl, for some years, when she died of consumption, and having no relations she was never inquired for."

"Well, as soon as it was dark I got her away from our hiding-place, and I took you both to a small hotel some miles off, where I knew the old landlord and his wife to be respectable people, as I had lodged with them at a previous date; and as they were Germans who could not speak a word of English, I felt sure your nurse, Sarah Jones, would not be troubled with too many questions."

"As I told the old souls I was a widower, and had brought my maid and child to them to take charge of for a time, and paid them very handsomely in advance for their trouble, on condition they did not mention to anyone they were there, as I did not wish it known, I left you in their keeping, feeling sure you would both be taken care of, and that you would not be discovered, for the hotel was in a very out-of-the-way place, and scarcely larger than a village inn. I knew that my Germans were wise enough to follow out my orders, as they were very poor, and I did not spare any money."

(Continued on page 425.)

HAD WE NEVER LOVED SO BLINDLY

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CHAPTER XXXIX.

"WHAT is it, Baill?"

It was six weeks after the ball; and Flora, having watched her husband with the gravest anxiety, as his face each day grew more haggard and wan, put the question which had been constantly in her mind.

"What is it, Baill?"

"Nothing, only the heat makes me feel as if I couldn't breathe," passing his hand over his forehead.

"I thought of riding over to Rivers Court," she said, presently, "to ask Neta to spend the day with me. Would you come with me?"

"Not I. I've got heaps of letters to write, and I must speak to Mitchell about that reaping machine. Of course you'll take Hampton!"

"Yes, won't you come and meet me? I am sure a ride would do you good," stroking the dark hair lovingly, through which here and there a silver streak was to be seen already.

"If you can tell me by what road you'll come I might."

"By Deepden-lane. Don't forget. I am sure it will be much better for you than poking over the farm, or your letters. How glad I shall be when Estace is big enough to go about with me!"

Then she went upstairs to put on her habit, calling in at the nursery on her way to take her little son a bunch of flowers, of which he was passionately fond.

It was a glorious afternoon—a day like that of

the sunny south—with scarcely a cloud to mar the perfect blue; and Flora felt inclined to be as happy as she used to be—as her husband put her on to her horse—and to cast dull care behind her.

"Change your mind," she said, with a bewitching smile, and he nearly yielded; only Philip, standing at his elbow, said, in a low tone,—

"You had better go," and he knew that if he went his cousin would say he had gone because he couldn't trust his wife.

"Baill you be gone before I come back!" she asked Philip, rather hurt that Sir Baill refused to accompany her.

"Yes, so you must say good-bye," stepping up to Kismet's side, and taking her hand unceremoniously. "You don't ask me whither away!"

"To the south of France, isn't it?"

"Yes, to Monte Carlo," with a significant accent, and a look straight up into her face.

"Won't it be rather hot there?" carelessly, as she stooped to stroke her horse's neck.

"Like an oven; but I'm not going for pleasure."

"Well, good-bye," riding off in a hurry, with a wave of her hand to her husband.

"So you are really off, Philip?" said Sir Baill, as he stopped at the door of the library, rather as if he did not wish his cousin to follow him into it.

"Yes, you are awfully sorry to get rid of me, I know."

"I won't contradict you," with a scornful smile. "I suppose you'll come back having lost your last farthing at the tables!"

"I don't think I've a last farthing to lose," raising his eyebrows. "But I am not going to gamble."

"Talk of Monte Carlo, and not gambling! No, Philip! I know you rather too well to be taken in."

"I don't say I won't gamble, but I'm not going with that intention. I have another purpose, which perhaps you may guess."

"Excuse me!" looking his cousin straight in the face, but rather with the expression of some noble animal brought to bay. "Your ways are not mine, and I don't care to know what takes you, or what brings you back."

"Want of funds will do the last, sooner or later. You haven't any curiosity, haven't you? You wouldn't stop me if you could!" leaning up against the bookcase, and looking down at Sir Baill with an evil smile.

"No; go to the devil, if you like," pulling out a bundle of letters and sorting them; his patience taxed to the last extreme, it wanted but one word to exhaust it.

Philip, exasperated at his apparent indifference when he meant him to be struck with dismay, determined to see if he couldn't rouse him.

"I am going to Monte Carlo to see if I can prove what I have long suspected. I needn't tell you what that is."

Sir Baill went on writing, as if he didn't hear him.

"Do you hear me?" raising his voice. "I want to prove who it was who murdered Lucius Fane, and I think I can."

"Yes! Are your efforts quite disinterested?" affixing a date.

"No, they are not. I want to ruin you. I want to drag you out of this house, which you ought never to have possessed." Sir Baill got up from his seat and stood confronting him, very pale, but calm as death itself. "I would have spared you once, if Flora would have loved me."

"Before my marriage?"

"No, afterwards. For seven years I have waited, and I've tried to make her, but it has been no use; and now I'll wait no longer."

"You tell me this in my own house!" through his set teeth.

"Yes; and now, after rejecting me with scorn, she throws herself into the arms of her old lover directly he appears."

He never finished the word, for Sir Baill came with one stride to where he was, caught him by the collar of his coat, dragged him, kicking and

resisting, to the top of the stone steps which led from the window to the garden, and with one kick sent him flying down the steps on to the gravel-path beneath.

"Go," he said, with a long drawn breath, "and never let me see your cowardly face again!"

Philip picked himself up, and slunk away like a dog with his tail between his legs, for Sir Basil's wrath once roused was terrible. Sir Basil leant against the window-frame, his chest heaving, the veins on his forehead swollen, his eyes flashing fire; and then, all of a sudden, the fire went out of his glance, his cheek turned ashy pale, his brows were drawn together as if with violent pain, and large drops gathered on his forehead.

After while he stumbled to a chair, leant his elbows on the table, his head on his hands. He sat like that for a long time, till Graham happened to come in with a message.

He was much disturbed by his master's white face, fetched some sal volatile, and begged to be allowed to send for the doctor; but Sir Basil, after drinking the sal volatile, said he was quite well. No doctor could do him any good, but a ride in the fresh air might.

The letters were deferred till another day, and, getting on his horse, he drove down to the farm, where he had a long talk about a machine for cutting corn, which was supposed to be out of repair. After that he turned his horse's head towards the lane where Flora had asked him to meet her.

By this time he thought that five o'clock tea would be over, and there might be a chance of her having left Rivers Court. To think that sneaking hypocrite should have dared to sully the spotless purity of her fame!

It was like a tadpole creeping out of the mud and trying to bespatter a star! And all the while that he was plotting and planning against him, and paying his loathsome addresses to a woman who would not listen to him, he was pocketing Sir Basil's money! Could human infamy go much further!

Such a fellow as that seemed to soil the air which he breathed! And whatever came of the breach between them, it would be something to be rid of the incubus of his presence.

Philip might stab him as to the hidden past, but with regard to his lovely wife he was powerless.

The thought of her was like balm to his wounded spirit, and a smile came across his lips as he heard the sound of horses' hoofs in the distance.

He quickened his pace, and taking a flying leap over a five-barred gate, alighted at the bottom of Deepden-lane, just where it meets the hill.

He patted his horse and listened. He fancied that he heard voices, but there was no sound of moving, and yet it was scarcely likely that Flora would have palled up in order to chat with the groom! He went up the lane wondering if anything had gone wrong; but as he turned the corner he heard a peal of soft laughter, and presently espied his wife sitting, kneeled with her usual grace, and holding out her hand for a spray of honeysuckle which Frank Rivers, balancing himself on one stirrup, was striving to reach for her at the imminent risk of a tumble. Hampton was nowhere to be seen.

Instantly his jealousy caught fire. Without waiting to consider that his wife could mean no harm when she had asked her husband to meet her on this very spot, he jerked his horse round and descended the hill at a pace for which he would have dismissed a groom at a moment's notice.

Whilst he had been looking forward to seeing her as a refreshment to his utter weariness of mind, she was dallying with a young, good-looking soldier—a dangerous old friend—accepting his flowers, and what else!

He rode fast through the hot sun till his poor horse's flanks were streaming, and never returned to the Abbey till Flora was dressing for dinner. He wouldn't go to her, but shut himself up in his dressing-room, feeling wretched and ill-used.

Oh! If he could only lie down and die, how

entirely thankful he would be! And then there was a knock at the door, and in answer to his groff "Come in," Flora came to his side, with her beautiful hair falling in clouds over her pale blue dressing-gown.

"Graham tells me that you've been ill. I've been in such a fright about you!"

"I wish Graham wouldn't be such an idiot!" crossly, as he had never spoken to her before. "I'm not ill—only tired—and anxious for my dinner."

Flora looked at him, her large eyes full of sorrow and surprise. "You don't look well, Hampton let Hermit down and hurt his knees, so Mr. Rivers rode home with me."

No answer.

"I made him stop in Deepden-lane because I wanted to wait for you, and I got him to pick some honeysuckle because you were so fond of it. Here it is!" laying one or two sprigs on the table.

"Basil, are you angry with me?"

A struggle between the suspicions which had been infused into him, and his own nobler nature, and then he threw out his arms and drew her close to his wearied heart.

"Oh, my darling, forgive me! I've been a brute!" and with a half-sob of hidden anguish, he kissed her again and again.

CHAPTER XL.

"So Sir Basil is ill again!" exclaimed Mrs. Willoughby, as she came out of her husband's study, with a very grave face. "What do you say to going to see Flora this afternoon?"

"I say that I am going to carry you off in quite a different direction," remarked Jenny with a smile. "We haven't been to Riverscourt for an age."

"No more we have; but Riverscourt can wait."

"So can the Abbey, or, rather, papa can go there instead of us."

"I wonder if he would!" thoughtfully.

The matter was decided by Mr. Willoughby himself. He came out of the room with a number of letters in his hand, and asked Jenny to say that he wanted his horse in half-an-hour's time, as he was going to see after Fane.

The one-horse phaeton started first, Jenny in a flutter of expectation, and her very best hat.

An anonymous letter had reached Mr. Willoughby that morning, which he had locked up in his desk, with the determination of finding out the writer before many weeks passed over his head. It warned him to look after his ward, who was in the hands of an unscrupulous villain. He would ruin her happiness, spoil her name, and end his hypocritical life on the gallows. Therefore, if she had any friends who were interested in her, she had better be removed from the Abbey before the crash came.

The solicitor, like most honest men, had a thorough contempt for an anonymous communication; but he had lived long enough to know that there rarely was a vestige of smoke without a fire of some sort or other. Therefore the warning reminded him of the former doubts which he had felt concerning the Baroness when he first came to the neighbourhood. They had been forgotten during the past seven years, when Sir Basil had been steadily gaining the respect of rich and poor by his upright conduct, unswerving justice, and general liberality. He would never be a thoroughly popular landlord because of his somewhat stern manner and grave face; all the grace and beauty of his disposition being hidden as it were under a moral water; but those who were unfortunate had reason to bless him, and those on whom the world frowned most harshly found out the way to his really tender heart.

"He is a grand character," Mr. Willoughby decided, as he rode along under the leafy hedges, and saw the maple leaves turning to gold, "and any trouble that has come upon his life has not been of his own making. I wish I could fathom the mystery. He is just the sort of chivalric, high-minded fellow out of which a villain can make

the largest capital. He will worry his life out, and be too proud to make a sign. Bad job if his heart is really affected," and the old lawyer shook his head, as he thought of the ward whom he loved even more than his own daughters.

Mr. Willoughby was shown into the octagon room, where a small fire was burning in the grate, though the warmth of summer still lingered in the air.

Sir Basil got up slowly from his chair, and gave him a cordial greeting; but even as he smiled and shook hands, Mr. Willoughby was struck with the change in him. His face was white without a tinge of colour; his eyes heavy, his lips grey.

"You are just the man I wanted to see," pushing forward a chair for Mr. Willoughby's benefit. "And now that Flora is out of the way," with a glance towards the garden, where Flora was gathering roses in the crown of her large garden hat, with little Eastace clogging to her skirts, and Frank Rivers, tall and straight as any poplar, was reaching the blossoms which were too high for her to touch; "I can count you on a subject which I want to keep from her as long as I can."

The solicitor twirled the string of his eyeglasses round his forefinger and pricked up his ears. Sir Basil leant his elbow on his knee, his forehead on his hand, and sighed. It cost him an effort even to allude to the dark secret which had weighed him down as a heavy burden. Would life ever seem the same again after he had once spoken? Would the daily routine go on, the sun continue to shine, wife and child know no abatement in their love?

Would this kind old friend, who had always stood by him from the first, still stick to him when the world had grown cold, and the voices of other men were raised in condemnation? After he had spoken it would be too late to ask—should he speak at all?

Whilst he hesitated the solicitor kept his eyes upon him, and at last broke the silence.

"Ever since I first saw you I've known that you had something on your mind. My advice to you is—tell it to your wife, and to no one else."

"Not to you?" raising his face, and looking at him in surprise.

"No, for Heaven's sake, not to me!" hastily, as he remembered the penalties for condoning a crime, and thought of the conflict that would ensue between his sense of duty and his friendship. Better for all parties that he should be out of it. "Only call me in when somebody else has found it out. If I can be of any use, count on me, but at present I should do you more harm than good."

"I'm to tell Flora, because a wife cannot give evidence against her husband?" a bitter smile on his lips.

"Partly for that reason, partly because a secret plays the deuce between husband and wife, principally because you must speak to somebody, or else it will kill you."

"I believe it will. Come into the garden," rising abruptly. "Rivers has come over with a message about the hounds. They want me to take them, but I don't think I shall."

"A capital idea! The very thing for you. Your grandfather made the best Master in the memory of man."

Flora came towards them, her eyes beaming with pleasure.

"So here you are at last!" both her hands outstretched in hearty welcome. "What do you think of Basil; he doesn't look well, does he?"

"No, he wants a change. I should pack my trunk and go off to Brighton. How do, Rivers, all well at Riverscourt?"

The four strolled about the garden, Eastace running here and there with the irrepressible activity of healthy childhood, Frank strolling along a little apart from the rest, Flora's hat full of flowers in his hand. He could not bear to come to the Abbey, but for his sister's sake he would not make a breach between the two houses.

He rarely came, unless somebody wanted him to bring a message, or his sister needed an escort

but, nevertheless, he and Flora were thrown together pretty constantly, and it required all the self-control taught by a soldier's life to enable him to keep his feelings to himself.

But ever since that first outburst he had sworn to himself that for the future he would suffer and be silent, and he had rigidly kept his oath. Sir Basil asked him to stay to dinner, but he declined, whilst his eyes involuntarily strayed to Flora to see if she would remonstrate; but she only smiled rather absently as she gave him her hand, and sent her love to Nesta. She was in a hurry for everyone to go away, and leave her alone with her husband.

The sun had gone down behind a bank of clouds, and Frank Rivers, looking over his shoulder towards the Abbey, as he rode homewards, prognosticated a thunderstorm. Perhaps that was why Flora felt so depressed. It was as if she knew some great misfortune was coming upon them that very night. The air seemed heavy with presentiments. Her husband talked with an effort, and kept sinking into gloomy silences.

Mr. Willoughby, who generally chatted so cheerily, was graver than usual, and kept looking at her with an air of commiseration, quickly turning away his eyes, however, when she happened to look up. She called to her boy, and taking him by the hand led him into the house.

"Got a headache?" asked the little fellow, his cherub face suddenly grave and sympathetic.

"Yes, darling, but it will be better to-morrow," anxious that not the most trivial cloud should damp his happy spirit. And then she heard him say his simple prayers, and felt that his "God bless dear father and mother," had already lightened the load on her heart.

As they went into dinner a telegram was handed to Sir Basil. He tore it open, glanced his eye over it, and crumpled it in his hand.

"Anything serious?" Flora asked, whilst her heart quickened its beat.

He did not answer, only walked quickly up to the fireplace and threw the yellow paper into the heart of the red-hot coals. When it was consumed beyond all recognition, he came back to the table. Flora could not see his face because of a large silver epergne filled with flowers and fruit, which stood in the centre of the table, so she waited in vague uncertainty.

"Philip is coming!" he said, and his voice sounded as if his throat was dry.

"Philip!" she exclaimed, in surprise, and then said no more, remembering the servant. If Philip Fane were coming after being kicked out of the house by Sir Basil, it must be something of importance, of most extraordinary importance, which was bringing him. The news increased her anxiety, but she could only exchange glances with her husband, and talk on ordinary subjects so long as the servants were in the room. She hurried over her dinner with great haste and little appetite, and it seemed to her as if the butler and footman dawdled most unaccountably. She spoke sharply in her feverish impatience to one of the men in grand livery, who handed her the same entrées three times over; and the man slunk away quite abashed, because Lady Fane was not in the habit of scolding.

As soon as the servants had retired, she jumped up, and came round to where her husband was sitting.

"Is there anything wrong, Basil?" she said, nervously, "because, if so, I want to hear it at once—now, this minute. I can't bear to wait any longer."

"You shan't wait," he said, very gravely, but stopping to pour out two glasses of wine. When they were filled with port he pushed one towards his wife, and took the other himself. "Drink that to the happiness of your future!"

"To yours!" she answered softly, putting her lips to the brim.

"That doesn't matter," shaking his head. Then he tossed off the wine to the toast that he had given her, got up from his seat, and saying, "Come into the octagon-room," led the way to the door.

CHAPTER XLI.

HAVING reached the octagon-room he drew her down on to the sofa by his side, and looked into her eyes with all the passionate love with which his heart was overflowing welling up into his glance.

"Child, do you remember those lines of Burns:—

"Had we never met so kindly,
Had we never loved so blindly;
Never met and never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted."

"Yes, but why think of them now?"

"Because they appeal to me so forcibly to-night. It would have been better a thousand times for you if I had never seen and never loved you. I was a monster of selfishness to marry you, and yet at the time I thought I was doing right," with a sort of sadness in his voice.

"What do you mean! How can you say so?" nestling closer to him, as if she thought some idea of parting had come into her husband's head. "You've been my only hope—my only happiness. I could not have done without you—you shan't talk like that."

"But I must, dear," gravely, but very tenderly. "Heaven knows I have loved you—loved you better, perhaps, than my conscience or my honour. There's nothing I wouldn't have done to make you happy—nothing I wouldn't do now. You believe that, don't you?"

"With all my heart. All the time that we've been married," her voice quivering, "you've only thought of me, and never of yourself at all."

"Flora, I had no right to marry you!"

A chill ran through her blood, as it flashed through her mind that Philip was right after all.

"No! no! I won't hear it!" lifting up her head. "It can't be true—it couldn't be!" and she shivered in the shelter of his arms.

An expression of the greatest pity crossed his face.

"I would have spared you, darling, if I could, but the whole world will know it to-morrow—and you must hear it to-night. Be brave as you can."

There was a pause, whilst his thoughts travelled to that hideous past, which he had never forgotten, and never could forget.

"I had a sister—a good, gentle little thing—with a lovely face and a winning way, that won every heart, however hard. Lucius saw her one day in the park; the next morning he rode down to Richmond and paid us a visit. We were poor, and kept carefully out of our cousin's way, simply because they were rich, and might think we wanted to get something out of them."

"I got a studentship at Westminster, and went to Christ Church just before he left. He took me up, for Mabel's sake, brought me into the fastest set, was always asking me to 'wine,' or taking me out in his tandem, or lending me a screw that I might go out hunting when I ought to have been working."

"It was a jolly life in its way, and I had an admiration for him then, which I wonder at now, but it did me no good. When he had gone it was hard to settle down into quiet ways; to go into lecture, when other men were sneaking off after the hounds; to sit at work, when others wanted to make a night of it. I tried, and I partly succeeded. I took a second-class when I left, and came home rather pleased to think it wasn't a third."

"No one came out to greet me—the house was as silent as the grave. The instant I put my foot in the hall I knew something was wrong. I asked for Mabel. She had gone—my mother told me between her sobs—run away with Lucius Fane! and I couldn't even follow, and give him the punishment he deserved, because the blow had been too much for her, and I had to stop at home and nurse her. Mabel had been to me what Estace was to you," his voice softening. "You can imagine what her loss was to me—her only brother. She wrote to me, and told me that

they were married, and I was to forgive Lucius for her sake. He had told her that it was better to slip away and make no fuss, for there were sure to be objections to the match on both sides—on ours, because he had not been so steady as he might—on the other, because his people always wanted him to marry a well. For her sake I had to keep quiet, and hope for the best, and try to cheer my poor dear mother."

"She soon died, and left me quite alone—a desolate embryo barrister, with scarcely bread-and-cheese enough to keep me alive. For two or three years I struggled on, and at last had a stroke of luck in the shape of an important brief. I was so proud of it, I believe I told everyone I met that I was 'on' in the Wolverton case. I had all sorts of wild ideas about the future, imagining my fortune already made; but to cut a long story short," passing his hand over his forehead, "I came home one day to see Mabel sitting in my chair, as changed as if she had lived through twenty years, whilst I had only passed through two. Her beauty hadn't gone—it wasn't that, but she had the saddest face in the world; and then her eyes were weary and wild as if with over-much crying, and her mouth was as sad as if she had forgotten how to smile. He had cast her off—grown tired of her—or his fancy caught by another face—cast her off as if she had been his mistress, not his wife!"

"And this was my sister—the one I was so proud of. Oh Heaven! if there's justice in Heaven that man ought to rot in hell!"

He paused as if the memory of that bitter time was too much for him; but his story had to be told that night, and time was pressing. Flora bent down and let her soft lips kiss her hand, but he drew it away from her with a little frown of pain. "Wait till you know all," he said, hoarsely. "Nothing—not even a dying mother—would have kept me then."

"I followed him, just able to pay the journey by the money I had got for the Wolverton brief. I hunted him down at Monte Carlo, and suddenly came face to face with him in his own room. What I said I can't recollect—it wasn't much, but it was to the point, and selfish cynic though he was, he felt it. You see he had been fond of me once. When I told him that he must take back my sister and acknowledge her for his wife before the world—even if she left him, as she would, directly her position had been secured from slander—he sneered, and said that was impossible. There was a small impediment in the way—another wife!—alive at the time he went through that mock marriage with Mabel."

"Can you wonder at anything! I rushed at him with a stout stick I had brought in case of need. I felt as if I could have torn him to pieces. He got behind a table, where I couldn't reach him. 'Why is it worse for your sister than for any other?' he asked, with another sneer. That maddened me; I took up a pistol and flung it at his head."

"There was a flash and a loud report—the pistol was loaded. When the smoke cleared away he was lying doubled up behind the table. I only thought he was stunned by the blow, and never fancied the bullet had touched him. I could not kick a man that was down so I left him to get up as best he could, and hurried down the stairs, scarcely knowing what I did or where I went. I slept at Nice that night, and started the next day for Sicily, anxious to get out of the usual beat of tourists, in order to recover myself before I went back to Mabel. I was a coward; I hadn't the courage to face her."

"It was some time afterwards that a letter reached me from a lawyer addressed to me as 'Sir Basil.' Then I knew that he was dead; and gradually, bit by bit, the whole horror of it broke on me. I had killed him, and I was to walk in the dead man's shoes!"

There was a pause, whilst he bent his head in overpowering anguish, and the cold dew of a deadly sweat stood out on his forehead.

Flora sat looking at him, the overpowering pity in her heart frozen into horror. Her husband had killed a man!

"Thou shalt do no murder!" the awful words rang in her ears.

He whom she had loved and revered and always thought of as better and nobler than any other, had a hand soiled with blood! Involuntarily, as a cold chill crept down her backbone, she shrank away from him.

In an instant he pushed her almost roughly from him, and stood up.

"I knew you would hate me. To-night, this very night, we part," he said, in a hollow voice.

The next moment her arms were clinging round his neck, her passionate kisses scattered wherever she could reach.

"Where you go, I'll go—your home shall be mine till death do us part!" she said, tremulously. "Oh! my darling, do you think I would leave you for this, or for anything else? It was nothing, only a blow in anger. I'd have done the same myself if anyone hurt Eustace or you."

He looked down into her face with eyes that seemed to feast on it, like a man who gives the last look at one he loves.

"I ought to have told you. I ought never to have brought you to this. Think, darling, your husband will have to stand in the dock!"

She was very white, but she lifted her head bravely.

"We will bear it together. Everyone will know that he deserved to die."

"And you can love me still!" with a slow wonder in his voice.

"Yes, better than ever, because—because you've been so unhappy!" leaning her face against his coat.

Then he put his arms round her, and drew her closer to his panting breast. A mist gathered before his eyes, his face grew deathly white; he sank backwards on a chair.

"Kiss me," he said, very low, hiding the agonizing pain which seized his chest as well as he could.

She kissed him softly, with infinite tenderness, her loving tears falling down upon his cheeks.

"You will feel better after this," and he constrained his lips to smile.

There was a knock at the door.

"Mr. Fane is in the drawing-room," said the butler, looking strangely perturbed.

"I will go to him," said Flora, "at once;" and before her husband could remonstrate she was hurrying across the hall, her eyes bright with a spirit of defiance, a flash upon her cheeks that had been so white before, and her heart beating tumultuously.

What she was prepared to do or say she could not tell, only Philip should not triumph. There were two men standing in the hall, and as the light fell on one she recognized James Carter. A slight convulsive shiver seized her, for she felt that he was a witness ready to denounce her husband. The other man looked like a foreigner. Then the drawing-room door was flung open, and she found herself face to face with her husband's bitterest enemy.

Philip Fane's ordinary self-possession failed him when she came towards him in her pretty evening dress, with her head thrown back, and her eyes shining. She looked so lovely that he involuntarily wished himself anywhere but where he was. She bowed as if to a stranger.

"Might I ask to what we are indebted for this honour?"

The blood rushed to his face.

"My visit is to your husband. Where is he?"

"Don't be afraid; he hasn't run away. He is coming presently," and her lip curled in utter scorn.

This was the low, selfish wretch who had taken her husband's money, whilst he was secretly hunting him down. It seemed to her as if he defied the very air he breathed.

CHAPTER XLII.

"I TOLD you that one day we should meet like this," said Philip, in a low voice, fighting against the fascination of her beauty, which he felt through every fibre of his being. "I told you

your husband would be in my power, and when that day came I'd show no mercy."

"Mercy from you! I would as soon think of trying to draw water from a stone. Let us come to business," coldly. "You are here to tell my husband that you know his secret. What are your terms?"

"I never said I had any terms."

"That goes without saying," with an impatient gesture of her hand. "To save time, please explain them at once."

"Not to you—but to Basil."

"To me. My husband and I are one," proudly.

"You will not crow about that when you know what he has done, and how he won the Abbey and the whole estate of Greylands," his anger rising under the lash of her contempt.

"I know what he did in a moment of passion," her chest heaving, "and under such provocation as might even have stirred a cold-blooded man like you."

"Cold-blooded!" he started. "Do you know that whenever I talk to you my veins are on fire?"

She looked at him as if she would have killed him with her scorn.

"Your terms!"

He muttered an oath, and his eyes flashed.

"If you will have it, you shall. I have my witnesses in the hall—James Carter, valet to Lucius Fane—Bertrand Chanchard, waiter at the hotel where he was murdered. By their evidence I can convict your husband of the murder of Lucius Fane. Look round," waving his hand towards the splendid furniture of the long drawing-room, "there was abundance of motive. Any fool can see it."

"You know that he had no motive at all," looking him straight in the face, "only an honourable man's natural horror and indignation at the insult to his sister."

"Do you mean to justify his act?"

"Any generous-hearted man would feel for him, and know that he might have done the same."

"Yes, if you had been Mabel," he said, slowly.

She turned away from him, sick with bitter loathing.

"Flora, even now I would do anything you asked me," his voice vibrating with passion, as he realized that all his triumph and revenge would be as nothing to him if they only bought her scorn and hatred.

"I would rather die than ask you anything. I suppose you had some plan in your head when you came down here; it wasn't simply for the sake of dragging your unfortunate cousin to the gallows," with a little gasp. "To put it plainly, for what, or for how much, would you hold your tongue?"

Philip winced; and then, reminding himself that this was no time for soft-heartedness—that he had not come there to be brow-beaten and trodden under foot—he said, slowly,—

"Basil must turn out of Greylands—which he only won by his crime—the entail must be broken, and, in case of his death, I must be named guardian of his son."

"Give you my boy—give you the charge of his inheritance? Never!"

"You don't understand. Greylands should pass from Basil's hands to mine. It would not be much of a price to pay for peace, and he has always hated it."

"Let you be master of Greylands, and defraud my boy! Let you be landlord to the poor tenants, and grind them down as tightly as you choose! You must be mad!" clapping her hands and looking up to Heaven, as if in her heart appealing to its mercy from the cruelty of man.

"Those are my terms. Take them or not as you like. It would be better to give up Greylands than to let your husband swing," he added, roughly.

The door opened, and in walked Frank Rivers, a light coat flung over his evening things.

"Excuse me, Lady Fane," bowing low, but with a glance of suspicion at Philip Fane, whose last words he had overheard. "I came to see Sir Basil."

"Oh, help me! help me!" bursting into tears, her calmness giving way at the sight of a friend, and involuntarily holding out her hands. He did not take them, but his lip trembled under his heavy moustaches.

"I will help you—only tell me how."

"This is a private conversation, and I must protest!" said Philip, white with rage.

Rivers held up his hand, as if in warning.

"I am here as Sir Basil's friend. It is for Lady Fane to trust me or not, as she chooses."

His nostrils quivered, and his eyes flashed as he held up his head, prepared for battle.

"I will trust you," she said, impulsively; and then and there she told the story of her husband's bitter wrong and the sin that followed, extenuating nothing, only giving the fullest pathos to it by her trembling voice and her eyes so full of pain.

Frank turned upon Philip Fane, and his eyes blazed.

"And for this you have frightened Lady Fane by pretending that her husband could be brought to the gallows! A jury would laugh at you—it could be nothing but manslaughter, and for that, considering the provocation, which was more than any man could stand, a judge would award the smallest punishment inflicted by the law."

"You would find it difficult to prove the quarrel," said Philip, sullenly.

"I could find, I've no doubt, a dozen witnesses to prove it. Don't be frightened," turning to Flora, with a kindly smile on his handsome face, "we will get your husband out of the mess with only a year's imprisonment—see if we don't."

"Then you advise him to stand a trial?"

"Certainly," with significant emphasis, "as the story is known to Mr. Fane."

Philip bit his lip till the blood came.

"I am ready to hold my tongue."

"Yes, if Basil gives up Greylands."

"You asked him to do that!" facing round upon Philip in stern amazement.

No answer.

"Let him make a clean breast of it, Lady Fane, and we'll all stand by him."

"Oh, thank you, thank you! You've made me so happy!" the tears running down her cheeks. "And who are those men standing in the hall?"

"The witnesses!" said Philip, defiantly; "the men who can prove that Lucius Fane was murdered by his heir."

"Rather premature, aren't they—unless they were brought down to extort black-mail!" staring at him fiercely. "Lady Fane, may I?" doubling his fist significantly.

"No, no; let him go, and come with me to Basil," passing her hand through his arm.

Philip, transported with rage, stepped forward, his face livid.

"Yes, go with your lover," he hissed between his thin lips; "play your husband false."

He got no further, for Frank Rivers freed himself from Flora, seized him by the collar, and dragged him over the carpet and through the hall, where the butler, men-servants, Bertrand Chanchard and James Carter, looked on in open-mouthed amazement; and the younger footman, who had reason to hate Mr. Fane, sprang forward to open the door. Then, when Frank had got him to the top of the steps, he loosed his hold and flung him from him, drawing a deep breath.

"Go!" he said, and his voice rang out clear as a trumpet in the darkness. "And never show your face in decent society again!"

That done he came quietly inside, and closed the door behind him.

"I don't know what Sir Basil will say," with a glance in the direction of James Carter, "but that man, I've reason to know, is wanted by the police."

Then he walked across the hall to where Flora was standing spell-bound.

"Now," he said, with a smile, "let me apologise to Sir Basil for interfering, but it was more than human nature could stand."

"If I had been a man I would have done it myself; but let someone go after him, and see



FRANK RIVERS, BALANCING HIMSELF ON HIS STIRRUPS, WAS ENDEAVOURING TO REACH A BRANCH OF HONEYSUCKLE.

that he isn't hurt," her woman's pity overmastering her anger.

"Very well, my lady," said Graham, respectfully, but no one seemed to think it necessary to hurry.

Flora was too intent upon her husband to give Philip another thought, as she led the way to the octagon-room.

"Providence seems to have sent you just in the nick of time," she said, softly, with a look of fervent gratitude at the young soldier.

"I heard a rumour that there was trouble at Greylands, so I could not rest at home," he answered, gravely, not daring to meet her glances.

Flora hastened on down the corridor, for it seemed unaccountable to her that her husband had never come out, but had left her all alone with Philip. It was so unlike him, for he was more careful of his wife than many men, and always spared her every trouble that he could.

She laid her hand on the handle of the door, a strange sinking in her heart; then, when she saw him sitting just as she had left him, she hurried forward eagerly.

"Basil, Philip has gone, and Mr. Rivers—" The words died away on her tongue. An awful trembling seized her.

Why was he so still! Why didn't he look up at her with the smile that never failed!

His head was drooping, one lock of black hair falling over the marble whiteness of his forehead.

She stretched out her hand, and tried to raise it; then, with a low, broken cry of exceeding pain, which Frank Rivers never forgot, fell down on her knees, her head falling forward on her husband's chest.

"Come back! Come back!"

But Sir Basil had gone beyond the sound of her voice, and his noble heart, after the "fret and fume" of this mortal life, had found the peace of Heaven.

Thus the old name was saved from the shadow

of disgrace, for Philip Fane's lips were sealed by the news of his cousin's death.

He was seen no more at the Abbey after his second ignominious expulsion. All his plans had fallen to the ground. His low associate, James Carter, slunk away from him as a rat from a falling tower, and after Rivers' hint emigrated to the United States, out of the way of the English police; and having neglected the Bar whilst trying to hunt down his cousin, he descended lower and lower in the social scale.

He probably would have ended his life in gaol had not the heiress of a rich, retired tradesman fallen in love with his somewhat good-looking face, and insisted upon marrying him.

She made him comfortable as to food, lodging, &c., but she bullied him night and morning, and as her money was tightly tied up he did not dare to desert her. Her temper grew worse as the years rolled on, and he often longed in vain for poverty and freedom.

Frank Rivers went back to India as soon as his health was quite restored; and Jenny Wilmoughby, tired of waiting for a man who made no sign, bestowed her hand upon Mr. Edward Johnson.

Sir Basil having spent half his fortune in freeing Trevanion Hall from its mortgage, it had now become Flora's property, in fact as well as in name, and she took refuge there for a time from the sad memories that haunted the Abbey.

Her husband was an irreparable loss. Every day she lived she seemed to find out some fresh token of his love and forethought; and, in spite of the sin and the sorrow which had clouded his life, she looked upon him, in his unselfishness, steadfastness, and purity, as only a little below the saints.

The little Eustace, with his bonnie dark eyes, so like his father's, was her great consolation; and often, when life seemed very lonely, she felt cheered and comforted by a visit to the nursery.

Captain Rivers came back after four long years, his handsome face a little browner and thinner, a galaxy of medals on his breast.

He made his way to Trevanion without waiting for an invitation, and found Flora standing by a fountain, under the shadow of a palm.

To him she was as beautiful as ever, as she looked up with a glad surprise in her eyes.

"Frank!"

"Yes. I've waited long enough, haven't I!" holding out his hands, and looking down with longing eyes into her upturned face.

One long minute of hesitation, and then shyly, and blushing deeply, she put her hands into his, and gently he drew her towards him, whilst his brave heart leapt with joy. After long waiting, happiness had come!

[THE END.]

THIN bamboo tubes are fastened to carrier pigeons in China, to protect them from birds of prey. When the bird is in motion, the action of the air through the tubes causes a whistling sound, which alarms predaceous birds, and keeps them at a respectful distance.

WALL-PAPER does not hang, and yet the person whose business it is to paste it up is called a paperhanger. The reason is simple. Long before the introduction of wall-papers, Arras, a town in France, was famous for its tapestries called "arras." These were used as wall coverings and the men who were employed to put them up were called hangers.

The largest hanging bell in the world is in a Buddhist monastery near Canton, China. It is eighteen feet high and forty-five feet in circumference, and is of solid bronze. The whole bell, both inside and out, is covered with an inscription of embossed Chinese characters about half an inch long, covering even the handle, the total number being eighty-four thousand. The characters tell a single story—one of the Chinese classics.



JUST AS THE DOG REACHED THE MIDDLE OF THE PLANK IT GAVE WAY.

THE MISTRESS OF LYWOOD.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ONE morning, a day or two later, Otho Lynwood suddenly announced that he was going up to town, and asked Adrienne if she had any commissions.

"You needn't be afraid of entrusting them to me," he told her, "for I am quite used to shopping with different ladies of my acquaintance, and have got quite expert in detecting the qualities of silks and satins."

Adrienne laughed, but shook her head.

"I don't doubt you in the least, for I know your taste in dress is unimpeachable. At this present moment, however, I am so well provided with everything I want that I have nothing left to wish for."

"Happy girl!" sighed Otho. "How few there are who can say so much!"

Lady Lynwood blushed, and her husband looked at her with a fond smile.

"You should rather say how few there are with such a contented disposition," he remarked.

"Shall you be long in London?" he added.

"I really cannot say—it will entirely depend upon circumstances."

The nature of those circumstances he did not mention, perhaps his silence was politic.

On arriving in town he went straight to his rooms, where he changed his travelling suit for evening dress and at about nine o'clock got into a hansom, and was driven to De Vere Gardens, where he was evidently well known, for the footman at once admitted him.

"Is Miss Farquhar at home?" he inquired, as he gave up his hat and stick, and the light overcoat he wore.

"Yes, sir."

"And alone?"

"Yes, sir," again.

He was ushered into the room where Hugh had been taken on his first visit, and there he found

Isabel, in her favourite half-reclining position, on the couch, reading a magazine—or rather pretending to read it, for it had dropped on her lap, and she was gazing into vacancy.

She started up as the door opened, and a bright light came into her eyes that Otho was not slow to observe; he noticed, also, that it faded almost immediately, and the thought came,—

"Did she expect anyone else?"

It disappeared, however, on consideration, for Captain Otho Lynwood had the bump of self-esteem pretty largely developed, and his experiences of women had been of such a nature as to give him a complete confidence in the power of his own fascinations.

"You are quite a stranger!" said Miss Farquhar, as she gave him her hand. "It seems ages since we last met."

"It can hardly seem so long to you as it has to me," he answered, bending down to kiss the slim white hand, and then seating himself by her side on the couch. "I need not say that only sheer necessity would have kept me absent from you so long."

"And what shape may the sheer necessity have taken?" she demanded.

"I have been compelled to dance attendance on my uncle, Sir Ralph Lynwood."

"Ah, yes—he has married a young wife recently, has he not?"

Otho assented with a monosyllable, and there was a half quizzical look on Isabel's face as she pursued her inquiries.

"Rather a disappointment for you—wasn't it?"

"Of course it was, in a measure; still I am a philosopher, and, after all, money is not everything."

"It is a good deal, though—to say nothing of the loss of a title."

"An empty honour!"

"Do you think so? I confess I should not take the affair so coldly, but then I am not noble

myself, and have, consequently, the love of a bourgeoisie for a handle to one's name."

Otho flashed a rapid glance at her. Were her words intended to convey a hidden meaning?

He could not tell, for her manner was sublimely unconscious, and she was playing with the fastening of the ruby and diamond bracelet she wore. Looking up, she met his eyes with a smile.

"Shall I give you a cup of coffee, or have you already had some?" she asked, rising, and going over to a table on which stood a silver tray with a small spirit lamp, a coffee-pot, and an exquisite little service of Sevres china set out on it.

"I have not had any, for I rushed off here the very moment I arrived in town."

"That was too good of you. Indeed, I feel highly flattered at your coming to see me so soon."

"It was a most natural thing for me to do, seeing that my thoughts have been with you ever since I saw you last," he remarked, slowly.

She did not evince any surprise, but raised her well-marked eyebrows as if slightly amused.

"Is that really so? I'm afraid your sojourn in the country must have been rather dull then?"

"On the contrary. But it would have been the same wherever I might have been. You are not easily forgotten."

She made him a graceful, negligent curtsy as she resumed her seat.

"Thank you. I like having pretty things said to me. Most women do, I think, although few of them are brave enough to confess it. You have a happy knack of paying compliments gracefully."

"Have I? In the present instance I meant no compliment, but was simply stating a fact."

"I have had a good many 'facts' of the same kind stated to me by different men."

"No doubt; but, perhaps, few have said it with so much sincerity as I do."

She shrugged her graceful shoulders, and a mocking light came in the brilliance of her eyes.

"I am not a child, Captain Lynwood, which is to say, I have lived long enough and seen sufficient of the world to gauge men's sincerity pretty accurately; and I tell you candidly I have no faith in it."

She took up a fan of some tropical bird's plumage, and waved it to and fro, in that slow, languid manner that was so peculiarly her own; and Oho thought to himself that Cleopatra must have looked something like this woman as she sailed under golden canopies down the Nile with her "curled darling," Roman Anthony, at her foot.

As much as he could be in love with any woman he was in love with her. She was not beautiful, but there was a voluptuous grace about her that appealed to his senses even more strongly than mere beauty would have done. His heart, usually so calm and regular in its beatings, began to throb rather faster than usual, and his excitement rendered him oblivious of the warning her words were intended to convey.

She was, as she said, no child; and some instinct told her he had come that night with a definite object, and that unless she prevented it a scene would occur.

Her dramatic instincts were keen, and, as a rule, she did not object to scenes of this description, but to-night she had a reason for wishing to avoid one. Hence her words.

But Oho was too self-absorbed to be warned. He had been attracted to her at first by her great wealth, and now the necessity for his marrying an heiress had become greater than ever, and he resolved to make a desperate venture. Her money would, at all events, keep his head above water, even if all his hopes with regard to the Lynwood estates should be frustrated.

"In these sweeping assertions as to men's faithlessness you must make some exceptions," he said, replying to her last words. "May I hope I am included in the latter?"

"You place me in an awkward position by such a question. Shall I sacrifice veracity to politeness, or politeness to truth?"

"I had hoped that there would be no necessity for such a sacrifice, and that you would have believed in my sincerity, at all events!" he exclaimed, seizing her hand. "Isabel, I love you, have loved you for months. 'Will you be my wife!'"

She quietly disengaged herself from his clasp, and moved a little farther away.

"I am sorry this has happened, Captain Lynwood—very sorry, but I really cannot blame myself. I like you extremely as a friend, but not enough to marry you."

Oho looked at her rather blankly. This had been the last answer he expected to obtain.

"But, Miss Farquhar—Isabel! You surely do not mean you refuse me unconditionally?"

"I am afraid that is my meaning, Captain Lynwood."

"Think over my proposal," he urged. "I will not press you for an answer now. I will wait as long as you like."

"Waiting would not make much difference. Six months hence I should probably say to you exactly what I say now."

"And if I had asked you six months ago, what then?" he said, with unconcealed bitterness. "Should you have given me the same answer?"

"Probably not," she replied, composedly, "but you must remember your position then was different to what it is now."

"And you would have taken that fact into consideration?"

"I dare say I should. You see I am candid with you, and I confess the prospect of a title would have had some influence with me. I should have liked to have been 'my lady.'"

"You may still be 'my lady' if you marry me. I am my uncle's presumptive heir."

"Yes, until he has children of his own, which may be almost regarded as a certainty. No,

Captain Lynwood, I am afraid you can hardly count on such a remote contingency as Sir Ralph's dying childless. I hope, for your sake, it may be so, but for my part I should not be willing to risk the chance."

She smiled quite serenely as she said these words, and was apparently unconscious of the dark frown that had spread itself over Oho's face. She knew quite well that six months ago she had encouraged his attentions, and had fully purposed marrying him if he asked her; but since then not only had his position become changed, but a very important alteration had taken place in her own feelings. This latter fact, however, she wisely kept to herself.

"Then, since you base your answer on such a line of reasoning, it is useless to plead with you any more," he said, the frown still on his face.

"Utterly useless. I am, as I said before, very sorry this has happened, but perhaps it is better to have come to a full understanding with you. It will prevent any complications in the future when we meet, as we shall probably, for I am going to your part of the world very soon to be introduced to my prospective sister-in-law, Nathalie Egerton, and I believe the King's Dess people are intimate at Lynwood Hall."

After this Oho did not linger long, but bade her good-bye, and went out into the night, his heart overflowing with bitterness.

Now that she was out of his reach he over-estimated the affection he told himself he had felt for Isabel, and her fortune seemed even more tempting than it had ever done before. His loss of it and her he laid down to Adrienne's account, and his hatred for his uncle's young wife grew deeper and deeper—his determination to ruin her more fixed.

"If only Egerton were a different sort of man," he muttered to himself, as he walked in the direction of Piccadilly, not even attempting to console himself with a cigar. "But he is one of those chivalrous fellows who pride themselves on being above the reach of temptation. It would be easy enough to make my uncle jealous of him, but probably the only result would be he would take Adrienne back to Nice or somewhere else, and afterwards the position would be precisely the same as before. I must adopt some more powerful method than that, but what shall it be?"

At that instant he ran up against someone as he was turning a corner, and who cannoned against him with some violence.

"Why the deuce don't you look where you are going!" he exclaimed, angrily, and his voice betrayed his identity to the person, who paused and looked up, thus disclosing the features of Mr. Phineas Hyam.

"Why, Captain Lynwood, you are just the very party I wanted to see!" said that worthy. "Which way are you going?"

"Not the way you are," returned the officer, shortly.

"Then I'll turn back and make it my way," suavely murmured the Hebrew. "Meeting you like this has saved me a journey, for I was going down to Lynwood to-morrow on purpose to see you."

"Indeed!"

"The fact is, sir, I want money."

"So do I, my good friend."

"And what's more," continued Hyam, "I am determined to get it. I've given you plenty of grace—too much, in fact; and you've taken advantage of it. You haven't treated me like a gentleman; in fact, you've treated me d—d badly."

"Then I've treated you as other people have treated me," replied Oho, with a reckless laugh.

"That's not here nor there. My business is to get my money, and get it I will."

"Can you squeeze blood from a stone?" demanded the young man, with fierce bitterness, and in that reckless mood when plain-speaking and the truth seemed easiest to tell.

"If you were to give me ten thousand pounds for doing it, I could not raise twenty sovereigns at the present moment."

Hyam's yellow face grew paler.

"What about your marriage with Miss

Farquhar, the heiress?" he asked, his voice faltering.

"That's all off."

"The Jew wrung his hands."

"Then I shall go down to Sir Ralph, and tell him all!" he cried, desperately, as he saw his chances of being repaid the loans he had advanced ebbing away.

"That would be a fool's trick," observed Oho, laughing again—the same hard, mirthless laugh as before; "my uncle would tell you I served you right to lose money advanced at such an exorbitant rate of interest, and would have you turned out of the house; so you see you would gain nothing by such a step. No, Mr. Phineas Hyam, we are both in the same swim, and if, as I am afraid, I'm sinking, why the probabilities are you'll sink too."

In his present mood his chances looked so desperate, and he was so entirely depressed by Isabel's refusal, that he cared little what he said. If Hyam liked to issue a writ against him let him do it, and let the scandal reach his uncle's ears. It would be just the same to him.

Perhaps the Jew, in his manifold experiences of human nature, understood the mood, and felt sure his client was telling the truth. To arrest Oho would be a very slight satisfaction, for it would bring his money no nearer to him than it was at present.

"The only consolation I can give you is that Sir Ralph's wife may have no children, or she or Sir Ralph himself may die."

"Yes," repeated Hyam, softly, and meeting the officer's eyes; "they may die—one of them, and then you would be a rich man. Come home with me, Captain Lynwood, and we'll talk the matter over."

CHAPTER XXV.

Soon after Lynwood's departure another visitor came to De Vere Gardens, and was allowed to find his way, unannounced, to Miss Farquhar's boudoir.

If there was anything strange in Isabel's receiving gentlemen visitors as she did, she thought little of the fact, and cared less, for anyone more thoroughly unconventional it would have been difficult to find.

She often declared etiquette was made for people who had no desire to enjoy their lives; and she, who lived every minute of hers so intensely, laughed at the idea of hedging herself round with those social laws to which Englishwomen bowed with blind obedience.

"Welcome!" she exclaimed, coming forward to meet Hugh Cleveland—for it was he—"I was afraid you would not come."

"I had some difficulty in getting away from the Carlyons," answered the young man, smiling at her friendly greeting; "they pressed me very hard to stay, and I had to plead a most important business engagement—though whether they believed I had business engagements at this time of the evening is quite another matter."

The coffee was still on the table, and Isabel poured out a cup, and handed it to him with a bewitching grace that was not lost upon him.

A change had come over Hugh since he saw him last, and its influence may certainly be ascribed to Miss Farquhar. At first he tried to decline her invitations, and excuse himself on various pretexts from coming to see her; but she was pertinacious, and would accept no excuses—she had set her heart on his subjugation, and it is very difficult for a man to resist the entreaties of a charming woman, who at once flatters his vanity and can meet him on the same intellectual level.

Little by little he yielded—at first reluctantly, and then gladly, for he felt that she was really doing him good, as, in effect, she was. She had succeeded in rousing him from the state of semi-lethargy in which Nathalie's desertion had plunged him, and reawakening his dormant energies and slumbering ambition.

Once more he took an interest in his work, an interest that she shared, for most days she visited his studio to see, as she said, how his picture was

progressing; and to cheer him on with words of encouragement and admiration—sometimes suggestions too, for her artistic taste was as great as his own.

The interest she took in his picture was a very natural one, for not only had she suggested the motif, but she also sat to him for one of the principal characters—Eleanor, as she offers the poisoned cup to fair Rosamond.

The subject was a hackneyed one, but he was treating it in an original manner, and it bade fair to be a most powerful picture. Isabel predicted it would make a sensation at next year's Academy, and he told her that if it did he should have her to thank for his success.

He had no relatives in London and few friends, so he was able to estimate at its true value the privilege of being able to drop in at De Vere-gardens when he liked, and where he was always sure of finding a welcome, and a bright smile from a pair of dark eyes, that grew more lustrous at his coming; for Isabel made no effort to conceal her pleasure in his society, and he was not insensible to the subtle flattery her manner conveyed.

"Do you know," he said, as he sipped his coffee, "you are spoiling me completely!"

"Am I?—as how?"

"Well, when I went home last night, I thought my room had never looked so dreary and unhomelike; they quite disgusted me, and I can only attribute it to the fact of having spent the evening in a place where feminine influence was visible everywhere, and where feminine hands had been at work."

She smiled, well pleased.

"You know you can come here when you like."

"Yes. But you must not make me too fond of coming here, otherwise my work will suffer; too many indulgences are not good for one."

As he spoke he put his hand to his brow, and she was quick to observe the gesture.

"Have you a headache?" anxiously.

"The merest suspicion of one. If you would play I think you would charm it away."

She sat down to the piano immediately, and her white fingers wandered over the keys, evoking soft harmonies that were as subtle in their effect as the spell Vivian cast upon Merlin.

Hugh leaned back on the cushions of the couch, feeling a delightful sensation of luxurious ease steal over him. The room was, as usual, full of the perfumes of flowers, and lighted by shaded lamps of ruby glass, which bathed everything in a soft, rosy glow. In the distance, behind the velvet curtains, the fountain plashed musically in its marble basin, making a running accompaniment to Isabel's playing; while she herself, clad in long flowing garments of white and gold, and with a broad gold belt around her waist, and gold-coloured roses in her hair, looked like the presiding genius of some scene of Eastern magic.

Presently she rose from the piano, and came over to the couch.

"Lie still!" she said, peremptorily, as he attempted to raise himself; and, as if to enforce her command, she laid her cool fingers lightly on his forehead. "Are you better now?"

"Quite well; there is some spell in your music that never fails in its effects. I wonder what the secret is! You have lulled me into a *dolce* for music sort of state that must resemble the *lotus eater's*."

"Then stay in it. One should always strive to prolong pleasurable sensations, for life does not offer us too many. My philosophy is that of Horace—to 'take the goods the gods provide.'"

"And what about the consequences?"

"Oh, they must look after themselves—sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. I believe there are really very few people in the world who know how to be happy. They are continually regretting the past, or fearing the future, and meanwhile the present slips away from them, and the opportunity is lost. I can never say that of my life, for I do not think I have ever let slip a chance of happiness, and I certainly do not intend to do so now."

A peculiar expression came in her eyes as she let them rest on his face, but he could not

fathom its meaning, and she threw a cushion on the ground, and knelt on it, so as to bring herself on a level with him.

The position, which would have surprised him in anyone else, seemed quite natural in her. She had accustomed him to seeing her do things that other people did not do, and she contrived to infuse such a grace in the way she did them that her innovations, instead of being *outré*, were invariably graceful.

"Do you not agree with me," she added, slowly, and after a pause, "that people—men and women—are very foolish who let conventional or social barriers stand in their way to happiness?"

"Yes, I do."

"And your sex cannot feel the hardship of it as mine does," she went on, the light playing fitfully on the starry and crimson radiance of her bracelet, as she turned it round so that the rays of the lamp caught the rubies and diamonds. "Men are so infinitely more privileged than women, and have so much more liberty in every way, and yet in certain respects they, too, are shackled. For instance, suppose a poor man loved a rich woman, ten to one a mistaken idea of honour would prevent his telling her so."

"But would it be a mistake?" asked Hugh, thoughtfully. "A man would be looked upon as an adventurer if he proposed to a girl who was an heiress, and I must say that, for my part, I should feel inclined to regard him as one too."

"And yet he might be a hero, who was sacrificing his preconceived notions of honour for the sake of love. I sympathise with the man in such a case, for if he acted otherwise, the happiness of two lives might be ruined, unless, indeed, the woman took the initiative and proposed to him, as queens do to their consorts."

"Such things have been known."

"Yes, and will be known again," she said, a deep crimson flush dyeing her cheeks, while her eyes were hidden by the long dark fringes of her lashes. "There are some instances where one may forget one's sex and rise superior to its weaknesses, and throw all considerations to the winds before the grand devotion of one's heart! It is not many women who are capable of it, but there are a few."

Cleveland coloured, and shifted his position uneasily as she raised her eyes and they met his. There was something in them that he had never seen before, or if he had seen had not noticed; and in a moment a full comprehension of its meaning flashed across him, almost stunning him by the suddenness of the revelation. He felt dazed, bewildered, like a man in a dream, but he could not withdraw his gaze from her face.

Her hand fell down, and rested on his, the fingers twining close round his own.

"Why should we beat about the bush any longer, when it is so much better for both to come straight to the point?" she said, her low voice hardly rising above a whisper, and sounding infinitely sweet in its wooing tenderness.

"I am rich, but I should only look upon my wealth with a curse, instead of a blessing, if I allowed it to stand between me and the man I love. There is such a thing as false delicacy, and it has wrecked many lives, but it shall not wreck ours, Hugh."

The spoken name was absolutely a caress, and she drooped her head until it rested on his shoulder.

"I know you are noble-minded enough not to misjudge me or my motives; and so, with this knowledge added to my assurance of your love, I bare my heart before you, and confess you as it king!"

For a few minutes the artist was absolutely incapable of speech; his brain seemed to whirl, his whole being was in a tumult, while a thousand thoughts and ideas flashed with lightning-like rapidity across his mind.

The temptation to yield was a great one. In the first place, he was touched to the soul by Isabel's disinterested affection; and if she had lowered his ideal of womanhood by coming down from the pedestal of modesty, on which he had set her, it was not for him to blame that which was done for his sake. How different was this love from that of the girl who had deserted

him—who had not been able to withstand the test of poverty, to which she would have been subjected as his wife!

Why should he not take that which was offered him? why should he condemn himself to a lonely, loveless life, because the woman to whom his heart was given, could never be his?

Isabel was young, gifted, charming, and wealthy—above all, she cared for him, and was eminently calculated to make any man happy.

"Take her," said the tempter. "Think what a triumph you would have over Nathalie Egerton; think how pleasant it would be to be master of a fine house, horses, carriages, servants, as much money as you wanted, and a fascinating wife into the bargain! Fortune offers you a prize, and you are worse than a fool if you refuse it."

Then some nobler instinct rose within him, and conscience whispered its warning.

"Do not yield—be true to yourself and your better nature. If you married her you would be taking a mean advantage of her generosity, for you do not love her—you never will love her. She would give all, and you would give nothing. In spite of everything, your heart still belongs to Nathalie Egerton, and will belong to her till the day of your death."

Isabel was at first too self-absorbed to notice his silence, but presently she raised her head and looked at him, and then a sudden chill seemed to sweep across her face, and her hands clenched themselves together spasmodically.

"Why don't you speak!" she exclaimed, a little wildly. "Have you nothing to say?"

"What can I say?" he returned, averting his eyes. I would cut my tongue out rather than wound you in any way, and yet—"

"And yet you cannot help it. Is that what you mean?" she demanded, her voice losing all its former sweetness, and becoming harsh and shrill.

He bowed his head.

"Miss Farquhar, I have been to blame—I confess it; but I could not possibly foresee—foresee that—"

He came to an abrupt pause, which she filled in with a little mirthless laugh, and then he continued more rapidly,—"

"I thank you a thousand times for all your goodness; I look upon you as one of the noblest, bravest, kindest of women, and I shall value your friendship as my dearest possession, but—"

"You do not love me! That is what you mean, I suppose!"

"If you were less noble and generous than you are I might contradict you, and declare I did," he said, gravely, taking courage as he proceeded, but feeling that man was never before placed in such a painful and awkward position. "Fortunately, or unfortunately, as the case may be, I esteem you too highly to attempt such a deception. Love is not a matter of will; it is fate, and sways everything by its own power. It is not gratitude, or admiration, or respect, or liking; if it were, then I could lay it at your feet; but as it is, I can only confess my heart is given to another woman; and, although she has behaved badly to me, has, in fact, thrown me over for the sake of a richer man, I cannot take back what I have given, and she must ever remain the one love of my life."

It was a noble speech, but she to whom it was addressed recognised no nobility in it at that moment. She was only conscious of an agony of shame, and humiliation, and wounded pride that scorched her like a burning fire. Above it all was a jealous rage that found a partial vent in her next words.

"And this woman is the Nathalie Egerton to whom my brother Gilbert is betrothed?"

Cleveland started in surprise.

"How did you know her name?"

"That is not to the point; confess I am right."

"I see no reason why I should deny it," he said, after a moment's pause of consideration. "Your brother can hardly feel otherwise than flattered that she was so ready to desert me for his sake."

"My brother will know nothing about it—from my lips," she responded, coldly, making a supreme effort to recover her self-possession, and partially succeeding.

She rose to her feet, and as she stood upright before him he saw that her face was deadly pale, and circles seemed, even in this short space of time, to have become hollowed beneath her eyes.

"May I ask you to leave me, Mr. Cleveland? I am tired and agitated, and shall be best alone."

Without a word he got up, and, after raising her hand to his lips, went out silently.

No sooner had he gone than the mask she had worn before him dropped from her face, and a dozen different emotions were depicted upon it.

She threw herself on the couch, burying her head in the cushions, while deep sobs, mingled with wildly-incoherent words, broke from her lips.

She felt no shame—hardly regret—at having been betrayed into a confession of her love for Cleveland, and, strange to say, that love was stronger than ever; for his conduct, humiliating as it was to her vanity, yet gave striking proof of the manliness and nobility of his character, and, in spite of the bitter blow he had dealt her, she felt a certain exultant pride that he was not swayed by the mercenary motives which actuate so many of his sex.

Money, that most powerful tempter, had been powerless to shake his fealty.

All her anger, her jealousy, were directed against Nathalie, who, unknown as she was, she already hated with an intensity and virulence that it is almost impossible to describe.

She hated her because she had jilted Cleveland; she hated her because she was beautiful; most of all she hated her because Hugh loved her; but for all that, her longing to see her grew intense. She wanted to see what manner of woman her rival was.

Long into the night she lay on the couch motionless; and at last, when the grey dawn was breaking, she rose up shivering, and went to her bed, there to toss restlessly about till her maid came into the room, and the business of another day had commenced.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OTHO LYWOOD was only absent from the Hall two days; and Sir Ralph, who had expected the attractions of London would have proved more irresistible, looked a little surprised to see him back so soon.

"I'm like a bad penny—if you'll pardon a somewhat hackneyed metaphor," remarked the soldier with a forced smile, when his uncle expressed astonishment that his absence had not been longer; "and as a matter of fact, I found town insufferably dull—everyone was either away or on the point of departure. The season has been a short one this year."

"And not a very brilliant one either, if one may judge from the society papers," added the Baronet, in whose study this conversation took place. "I suppose next year I shall have to have Adrienne presented, and for her sake shall spend a month or two in town. I must get the family diamonds from the Bank, and have them reset, so as to be ready for her."

Otho winced. He had long looked upon the diamonds—which were exceedingly valuable gems—as his own, and predestined them for the payment of sundry debts when he should succeed to the baronetage, and be in a position to meet his liabilities. Each reminder of the change in the aspect of affairs since Lywood had a mistress was bitter to him as wormwood.

"Were the diamonds mentioned in your wife's marriage settlement?" he asked, with an assumption of carelessness.

Sir Ralph looked surprised.

"We had no marriage settlement—I thought I told you."

"If you did I had forgotten it. I do not know that the settlement is of any consequence, after all, for of course Adrienne's future will be

secured by your will. By the way have you given Strange instructions yet for preparing it?"

"No, I thought I would wait for another month or two before doing so on account of certain leases that are in process of renewal, besides which I intend selling some of those outlying lands beyond the Hall estates, and investing the money in the purchase of the Lodge Farm, which will soon be in the market, and which will be a most valuable acquisition to my property."

An expression of intense relief came in Otho's eyes, but his uncle was looking another way, and so it passed unnoticed.

"You are very wise," he observed; "it is much better to have these sort of matters quite plain and straightforward."

"So I think," returned the Baronet; then he added, laughing, "I don't intend the lawyers should have a chance of dividing my estates between them after I'm dead, because some clause in my will is not so clear as it might be. It is not wise to put off doing important things as a rule, and I'm not given to procrastinating, but in this instance I can't very well help myself, and I don't suppose I'm likely to die just yet."

"Indeed, no—I hope not!"

"At all events, I don't feel very like it. I think I'm good for another twenty years at least," said Sir Ralph; and, indeed, he looked the very picture of health as he stood there, in his favourite tweed shooting-jacket, and with tan-coloured gaiters—the beau-ideal of an English country gentleman.

Otho's heart sank—his chances of succeeding to the Lywood estates seemed so very remote, and he left the study rather abruptly. In the hall he encountered Adrienne, who had on her hat and mantle.

"I'm going for a walk to the Dane Woods," she said, smiling at him, as she drew on her gloves.

"Alone?"

"Yes. Sir Ralph has an appointment with one of his tenants, and can't leave home this morning."

"I won't offer to accompany you, for I'm going to be rather busy myself. But why have you chosen the Dane Woods? Are you anxious to have your fortune told by the old woman who creaked so dismally the other day?"

Adrienne shuddered.

"No, indeed. I should not venture there if I did not know that all the gipsies were gone, Rebecca with them. I want to get a particular sort of fern for my rockery, and it grows in the Dane Woods, but nowhere else."

"Which way are you going?" asked Otho, a sudden interest in his manner.

"Along the road. I know no other way."

"I can tell you a much prettier one—by the riverside, and it is nearer too, to say nothing of its being cool and shady, which is a consideration this warm morning."

"Then I shall certainly avail myself of it."

Otho went to the end of the terrace with her, explaining the route, which was quite unfamiliar to her; and then she set off, taking with her Sir Ralph's last present, a huge St. Bernard, who looked big and strong enough to prove an efficient protector.

After she had gone a little distance she was very ready to acknowledge that Otho had been right in saying this way was prettier than the road; it was wild and uneven, certainly, but extremely picturesque, and led along the cliff by the side of the River Dane.

Besides its rural beauty, it had the merit of being entirely private, and Adrienne did not meet a soul all the way. At last she came to a light bridge thrown across from one cliff to the other, and partially covered with ivy. It looked old and shaky, and as it was rarely used, and yet there seemed no other method of crossing the chasm, which was a very deep one.

Adrienne shuddered as she looked down and saw the jagged, pointed rocks, and the river foaming over great boulders, and pictured to herself the fate of any unfortunate who should slip down; inevitably they would be dashed to pieces against those cruel stones.

She missed the dog, who had lingered behind to investigate something that presented points of interest to his canine mind, and so she turned round to call him.

"Frits! Frits!"

He answered with a deep bay, and came bounding up, wagging his tail penitently.

"You go first, sir, and pilot the way," said the young girl, pointing with her finger across the bridge.

The animal put his forefeet very carefully on the plank, then turned and looked at her with an expression of almost human intelligence and reproach in his large brown eyes.

"Go on!" she commanded, preparing to follow; but just as the dog reached the middle of the plank it gave way, and to her horror, she saw him fall into the bed of the river below.

Luckily she had as yet only placed her one foot on the bridge, and of course, instantly drew back on witnessing the accident, uttering an involuntary cry of terror, that was stifled by the intensity of her anxiety, as she bent down over the side of the cliff to see what fate had overtaken poor Frits.

By the merest chance he had missed the rocks, and fallen into the very middle of the stream, from whence he was able, with very little difficulty, to swim to the bank, and in a few minutes he had shaken his coat, and after scrambling up the rugged face of the cliff was soon at his mistress's side.

Regardless of his dripping condition, Adrienne fell on her knees, and threw her arms about his rough neck.

"Oh! Frits—Frits! I am so glad you are saved. I should never have forgiven myself if you had been killed, although it would not have been my fault!" she exclaimed, and then rose and retraced her steps homewards, for she felt too shaken by the accident to think of continuing her walk to the wood.

She was very thoughtful as she walked back, for a strange doubt would obtrude itself on her mind. Innocent and unsuspecting as she was, she was not deficient in penetration, and it struck her that Otho Lywood must have known the bridge to be unsafe. Suppose she had crossed it first instead of the dog!

She turned sick and giddy at the thought, and did her best to dispel it, telling herself that it was impossible the young man could have known anything about the rotten condition of the wood-work, and that she wronged him deeply by so awful an idea. Still, there are some instincts stronger than reason, and this sudden mistrust of her husband's nephew was one.

Close to the Hall she met the soldier himself, in company with Lionel Egerton, and she noticed that, as he saw her, the former grew deadly pale, and put up his hand to his mouth with a gesture peculiar to him, and indicative of intense nervousness.

Lionel did not observe it, for his eyes were fixed on Lady Lywood, who had not yet recovered from the effects of her fright, and whose face was quite destitute of colour.

"Are you not well?" he said, "I ask because you look so white."

"I have had a shock," she returned, gravely, and thereupon gave a detailed account of what had happened.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Egerton, who was considerably agitated at the recital. "You have, indeed, had a narrow escape. The bridge was condemned as unsafe, some ten years ago, and has never since been used, but my father would not have it demolished because it used to be a favourite haunt of my mother's, besides being in itself very picturesque. Another and more substantial one was constructed a little distance off, but it is seldom or never used, for the best way from here to the Dane Woods is under the cliff, not over it."

"I did not know that," said Adrienne, looking steadily at Otho. "I was told to cross the bridge; and, of course, I was not aware there was more than one bridge—no mention of a second was made."

"My dear Lady Lywood, if you had gone the way I directed you, you would not have been near the unused one!" interposed the

officer, partially recovering his self-possession, although he was still very white. "I do not think it is fair of you to blame me for what must have been a mistake on your own part!"

"I do not blame you," she replied, simply; and then, with a slight bow to Lionel, she passed on towards the house.

After she had gone, the two men stood where she had left them. Ocho moodily tapping his cane on the ground, Egerton watching him. At last he looked up with an uneasy laugh.

"Well, have you done studying my face?" he demanded, with an assumption of ease he was very far from feeling. "What do you think of it?"

"I think," said Lionel, deliberately, "it is the mark of one of the blackest hearts that ever beat in human body."

For a moment Ocho seemed so absolutely astounded by the words as to be incapable of speech; then he raised his cane threateningly, but with a blow of his own Egerton knocked it from his hand, and it fell some distance away.

"Are you mad?" exclaimed the officer, his eyes flashing fiercely; "or what do you mean by such language?"

"I mean what I say, nothing more or less, and if you ask me why I think so, I tell you that I believe you have twice done your best to compass the death of your uncle's wife, and that you are at heart as much a murderer as if you had plunged a knife in her body."

He pronounced the words steadily and deliberately, as if he had well weighed their import, and Ocho staggered back and put his hand before his eyes, for a moment too overcome to reply.

But his self-possession rarely deserted him for long, and he recovered it all the more quickly as he felt the imperative necessity of it in this emergency. Egerton, he knew, was not a man to be trifled with, especially in a case like the present, and he was looking at him with a gaze as stern as that of some relentless and avenging deity.

"By Heaven! I will make you answer for your words!" he exclaimed, in a low, hoarse voice. "No man shall accuse me of such a crime and go unpunished."

Lionel made a gesture of contempt.

"There is no necessity for these heroics with one who knows you as well as I do," he said, scornfully. "I have told you what my opinion is, and if I had sufficient proofs of your guilt I should go straight to Sir Ralph and lay them before him. As it is, I have simply moral conviction, and so I do not feel justified in taking such a course of action, but I have spoken to you thus with a view to the future. Lady Lynwood is in your way, and her removal would be your gain; so much is clear, but I warn you that henceforward I shall constitute myself the guardian of her safety, and if harm come to her, shall hold you responsible for it."

"I do not understand this melodramatic nonsense. Your brain must be giving way under the pressure of reading too many novels, I should imagine," rejoined Lynwood, with a bitter sneer.

"Melodramatic or not, I mean every syllable I have uttered, and, what is more, you know I do. I have put you on your guard, not for your own sake, but for Lady Lynwood's, and you are quite well enough acquainted with me to be aware that I am not in the habit of making vain boasts or empty threats," said Egerton, turning on his heel and walking away.

Manfully he wondered whether he was doing right in not seeking Sir Ralph, and telling him his suspicions of Ocho. Was it not a duty he owed to Adrienne to do so?

Finally, however, he decided in the negative; for, after all, as he had said, he had no legal proofs of the officer's culpability; and the Baronet, whose trust in his nephew was very great, might declare his idea to be the insinuation of a diseased brain. As it was he had shown Ocho that Adrienne had a protector, and he did not think her safety would be again endangered, more especially as, from her manner, she, too, seemed to have a distrust of her husband's

nephew, and would, therefore, be on her guard against him.

Lionel's heart thrilled with horror as he thought of what would have been her fate but for the providential accident of the dog crossing first.

He pictured the fair dead face, the mangled limbs, and a prayer of thankfulness went up from his inmost soul that Heaven had been merciful and spared the young life from such a ghastly termination. His blood boiled with indignation against the villain who had done his best to send her to her doom, and involuntarily his hands clenched themselves together.

"There must be a great deal of the brute instinct left in me," he muttered, noticing the action; "for if I only had that man's throat between my fingers at the present moment, it seems to me I should squeeze the very life out of it, and feel I was but executing justice. And yet the only accusation I can bring against him is a moral one; he has done nothing of which the law can take cognizance; and some people would ignore the circumstantial evidence that, to me, seems so strong. Perhaps I should not attach so much importance to it, if I did not know his thoroughly unscrupulous nature of the man, to which crime is justified by self-interest. But surely he will make no further attempt now that he knows he is being watched!"

And comforting himself with this assurance Lionel returned to King's Dene, from whence Mr. Farquhar that day took his departure.

(To be continued.)

MR. CLEMENTSON'S TREACHERY.

—30—

(Continued from page 416.)

"I also gave directions to Sarah not to take you out of doors at all until I saw her again, and she, poor girl, was far too timid to disobey me."

"That evening I went with your father to identify your cloak and a few other little things belonging to you, which I had taken the precaution to leave on the seashore saturated with water, and which I knew would be picked up, together with articles owned by other people who had been washed away—and that cloak convinced your parents that you and your nurse were both drowned; and although your father made every inquiry about you, you were not heard of any more, and your mother being so ill, prevented him from seeking you much himself."

"I undertook to look for you instead, and each day I pretended to have traced out wrong people, till Mr. Armstrong told me to give up the fruitless search, as he felt convinced that you and Sarah had both been washed out to sea and would never be heard of any more. With the deepest sympathy I agreed with him, and remained for some time longer in the neighbourhood to console him."

"At last I went away. Then I returned to the hotel where I had left you, and took you and Sarah by a steamer that started by evening for a seaport town some hundreds of miles from Cyprus, and remained there until Sarah died."

"By that time I had grown to love you as my own son, for, strange to say, I felt no bitterness towards you from your earliest childhood; and the fact of your looking at me with your mother's speaking eyes seemed to draw me to you with an almost passionate devotion, and I could not bear you out of my sight."

"After Sarah's death I took you to Australia and gave you a good education at Victoria, and you will remember we remained there until you were nineteen, when I thought it would be good for you to travel about and see the world, which we did. But when I heard of poor Olive McDonald's death I made up my mind to return to Fairlight Hall, and make you heir to the estate, which I have done, my boy; and I hope that when you and Jasmine are married, you

will settle down there and keep up the old place for my sake; although I fear you won't care, to remember me long when I am dead."

"Don't say so, father," returned Douglas Armstrong, with feeling. "I shall always think of you with affection for your past kindness to me; and I shall ever regret that the terrible thirst for revenge should have caused you to commit so sad a sin, which must have destroyed all your happiness for the last twenty years, and which has caused your dying hours to be laden with misery."

"You are right," answered Mr. Clementson, sinking back on his pillows exhausted, for it had taken him a very long time to relate the story of his guilt, which he had only been able to do in broken sentences, but he could not be induced to rest until he had finished.

"Yes, you are right, Norman," he repeated feebly, "I am miserable, but I hope there is forgiveness even for me."

At that moment a carriage drove up to the door, and Reginald McDonald sprang out of it, followed by Mr. and Mrs. FitzGerald Armstrong—for Reginald had met them while travelling abroad, and had become great friends with them; and they had told him about the loss of their infant son, and how they had mourned for him ever since. And on finding that Reginald lived at Lake Crescent they asked him if he knew of a Mr. Clementson, who owned Fairlight Hall, and they were surprised to hear that he was Reginald's great uncle, and still more so to find Mr. Clementson had never returned to England for so many years.

They told Reginald of his uncle's supposed kindness to them at the time they had lost their child, but refrained from mentioning their instinctive dislike to him, feeling that it would not be good taste to do so; but they said they had never met him since, as they had not looked for him in any way, believing him to be in England, while they had retired to a small watering-place abroad, and lived there almost ever since, instead of settling down on the estate that had been left them, which at first they had intended to do, but which they had let for a lease of twenty-one years after they had lost their boy.

The lease was up, and they were determined to settle down, and try and take an interest in their property.

They gave Reginald McDonald their address, and a pressing invitation to come and see them as soon as he returned to England.

When Reginald heard his uncle's confession to Douglas Armstrong he lost no time in telegraphing to his friends to come to Silverdale immediately; and as they had fortunately returned home, they both started to obey the summons without delay, although they could not imagine what they were wanted for, as Reginald had not explained in the telegram for fear of raising false hopes for them. But he met the first train they could arrive by, and while they were driving up from the station he told them all he had heard Mr. Clementson say; and they all went to Eva Wallpole's house with beating hearts.

"Who is in that carriage?" inquired Mr. Clementson, starting up as he heard the wheel stop suddenly.

"It is Reginald and two strangers," said Jasmine, looking out of the window; and before she could promise to go and see who they were, the door opened, and Reginald entered the room, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong.

"Has Heaven sent you?" asked the dying man, with agitated breath. "Thank Heaven you have come before it is too late. Douglas, there is your father and mother! Rhoda, there is your long-lost son," and in another second Douglas Armstrong was clasped in his parents' arms, and when they turned to speak to Mr. Clementson they found that he had fallen back—dead!

Six months later the bells of Silverdale church rang out merrily in honour of the wedding of Douglas Armstrong and Jasmine Wallpole, and there was only one sad heart among all that assembled at Mr. and Mrs. Wallpole's house to

wish them happiness; and no one ever knew of the secret sorrow of that one, for Reginald McDonald was the gayest of all the guests, and so bright was he that even Mrs. Wallpole thought she must have made a mistake about his affection for her daughter.

[THE END.]

SIR RUPERT'S WILL.

—10—

CHAPTER V.—(continued.)

"Don't pity her—she is undeserving a moment's consideration!" he exclaimed, almost fiercely, as he raised himself on his elbow so as to bring his eyes on a level with hers. "She is a woman of whose nature you would have no conception! First of all, she bartered her youth for greed of gold, and then to secure it she committed one of the blackest and meanest of crimes!"

"Perhaps you misjudge her—she may not be so bad as this, after all!" faltered Mildred. "Have you given her a chance of defending herself?"

"I have never set eyes on her, and I would go a hundred miles out of my way to avoid the necessity of doing so," he answered, pulling at his moustaches. "There is no defence possible; facts speak too plainly for themselves to admit of contradictions. Well, she has got what she signed for—money, and no doubt in the enjoyment of its possession she forgets she set that gave it to her. She knows quite well that I shall never interfere with her, and so she has nothing to be afraid of!"

"And you think she is satisfied—happy?"

"I have no doubt of it! Fine dresses, splendid jewels, a high position, and money at her bankers, are quite sufficient to constitute the happiness of women of her class. But let us talk of some pleasanter subject than my cousin's widow—we need not look far in order to find one."

"We had better go and find Miss Denver!" said Mildred, and the soldier was conscious of some subtle change in her tone and manner that he could not have explained. She was very silent after this, and hardly spoke until they all three got in the boat, in order to return home. Then she and Maud sat side by side, while he took the oars and pulled them back, stealing a glance now and then at the sweet face opposite, which looked strangely sad in the yellow glow of the sunset. When they landed he walked with them as far as the gate of the cottage, and there Maud dismissed him.

"I can't ask you in to-night, because papa is not at home!" she said, in easy explanation; "but to-morrow I shall hope to introduce you to him!"

So Captain Ingram went back to a solitary dinner at his hotel, and afterwards sat at the window looking out on the river, and feeling rather lonely as he puffed at his cigar, and watched the blue clouds of smoke melt imperceptibly away. And all the while Mildred's face came before him, and Mildred's soft lustrous eyes looked into his.

"Pshaw!" he exclaimed at last, rising impatiently, and leaning out of the window. "I think I must either be an arrant fool or in love!—in love with a girl I have only met three times, and of whom I know absolutely nothing beyond the fact that she has the sweetest eyes I have ever seen!"

He stayed there musing for another half-hour, until the star flowers were blossoming in the blue fields above, and the young moon had risen from over the tops of the distant trees. Then, struck by a sudden thought, he went down to the landing-stage, got into his canoe, and was soon paddling up the river with incredible swiftness until he reached the place where the two girls had disembarked that evening.

"If anyone had told me a month ago that I should come several miles out of my way to look at one particular window in one particular house

I should have said he was a lunatic!" he muttered to himself, as he walked across the dewy fields. "Well, I'm not the first man whom a pretty girl has made a fool of, and I don't suppose I shall be the last by many a hundred!"

A very safe conclusion, Captain Ingram! The cottage was in darkness, but its inhabitants had evidently not gone to bed, for upon the soft summer silence there fell the sound of voices, and the soldier was brought to a sudden standstill, at a corner of the garden where a rustic bench was placed, screened from the gaze of passers by a high hedge. Maud and Mildred were seated on this bench, and as Captain Ingram paused, uncertain whether to advance or retreat, he heard the former say,—

"It would really be only a justifiable revenge on your part if you were to make him fall in love with you, and then laugh at him!"

The officer retracted his steps, rather slowly, and meditating these words the while. Who was the "he" referred to? Surely not himself!

No, he at length decided, this would be impossible, and so dismissed them from his mind. In the afternoon they returned very vividly, and he had no difficulty in reading them aright.

CHAPTER VI.

AND so the summer days went by, golden with sunshine, and sweet with the breath of June roses; and July came in, promising to be, so far as weather was concerned, the most perfect month of the whole year.

And weather has a great deal to do with the enjoyment of a holiday on the Thames, as all the world is well aware. It is probable that if the skies had been leaden, and the earth soaked, Mr. Denver and his daughter would have hastened back to their cosy, little home in Regent's Park, and Mildred's chances of meeting Captain Ingram would have been very considerably lessened. As it was she saw him every day, sometimes for eight or ten hours a day, for he made a third at all their excursions; and when he brought the two girls home at night Mr. Denver would meet him at the rose-wreathed porch, and ask him to come in and have dinner if he would consent to take "pot luck," which the soldier was only too delighted to risk.

He and Maud flirted in a perfectly open and liberal-spirited manner, each being quite aware of how much, or how little, the other meant; but the girl was wise in her generation, and never let Mildred suspect the part she was playing, or her perfect understanding that Captain Ingram's attentions to herself were only assumed as a cloak to hide the deeper feeling he entertained towards her friend.

Mr. Denver was quiescent. He had an idea that young people were intended to play the active part in the world's drama, and old ones fulfilled their destiny much better by remaining passive. Besides, his faith in his daughter's ability was unbounded, and he found submission to her wishes meant the peace of mind for which he longed. Thus, all things considered, it was better to let her go her own way unmolested.

"How is it you never go up to London?" inquired Captain Ingram one day, when he and the two girls were sauntering slowly across the meadows towards the river. "I thought ladies could not exist for any length of time without a day's shopping."

"Then you showed your entire ignorance of the matter," responded Maud, flippantly; "besides, we don't exist down here, we vegetate."

"I shouldn't mind if the rest of my life were spent in such vegetation," he said, with a significant glance; "at all events, it is idyllic enough for Tennyson himself."

"But, nevertheless, slightly monotonous. After all, the river is only the river, and I really chink by this time I know every shallow, every creek, every breakwater between Richmond and Chertsey! Your idea of a day in town is not a bad one. What do you say, Mildred?"

Before she could speak the officer interposed,

"You haven't seen the Academy yet, and I hear it is really worth a visit. Will you let me take you there to-morrow afternoon, and in the evening to the opera?"

"Not the opera," said Mildred, hastily, and with a glance at her black dress.

"I beg your pardon. I ought to have remembered you were in mourning," he said, apologetically; but though he had known she was in mourning he was still ignorant of who the crape was worn for. Once, when he had asked Maud, she had replied "a near and dear friend," and had contrived to evade giving any other answer, but in such a perfectly easy and natural manner that he never imagined there was any ulterior motive for her reticence.

"But if we can't go to the opera we may manage the Academy," Maud said. "I went there two or three times in May, and saw some wonderful bonnets. Perhaps this time I may be able to catch a passing glimpse of the pictures."

Thus it was arranged, and the next morning they all three started, and arrived at Burlington House somewhere about twelve o'clock. This was Mildred's first introduction to the Academy, and for a time she forgot everything else but her delight in the pictures. Maud behaved much more philosophically, put up her eyeglasses, looked critical, and made would-be learned remarks about "middle distances, foregrounds, etc.," to which Roland listened with quiet amusement.

"What a horribly thing place this is!" she exclaimed, making a rush at a divan, and triumphantly securing two seats—an opportunity she had patiently waited for over ten minutes. "I have got the crick in my neck, and my pet corn is only just recovering from the fourteen stone deposited on it by that female Daniel Lambert over there. I wish," plaintively, "I had brought my bonbonnière, for some chocolates would be a perfect god-send at the present minute."

"They are easily procurable in the refreshment department. 'I'll go and get you some,' he said. "Will you stay here until I return?"

"I have no intention of moving for the next half-hour, because I see at least a dozen people with their eyes on this seat," declared Maud, spitefully, whereat Ingram laughed as he threaded his way through the crowded room to one yet more densely packed.

The constantly changing stream of people amused Mildred, accustomed as she had been to the quietude of Ingram Chase, and before that to the monotony of school life. Even such a glimpse of the great London world as this had in it an element of excitement as well as novelty, and she scanned the different faces that passed before her with the eager curiosity of a child.

"And to think that amongst all these human beings there is not one I know!" she exclaimed to Maud.

"But that is not the case. At least there is some one who knows you, and who is making her way over here. Do you see her!—a fair woman, rather pretty, with sandy hair."

Mildred followed the direction of her companion's eyes, and there was Miss Pedley, looking very unlike the demure nurse in her fashionable pale green satin dress, with its lace fichu, and coquettishly arranged bundle of roses.

"Oh, Maud, what is to be done!" exclaimed Mildred, in a panic. "Suppose Captain Ingram should return while she is talking to me, and should hear her address me as 'Lady Ingram'!"

Even Miss Denver, with all her calm assurance, was rather taken aback at the suggestion of such a possibility; but before she had time to say anything Miss Pedley was shaking hands with the young widow, and expressing her delight at the encounter.

"Such an unexpected meeting, too," she said, with an accent that made Mildred feel she had committed a breach of good taste in coming to a public place. "Are you staying in London, Lady Ingram?"

"No I am visiting some friends near Surrey."

"On the river? How delightful! I have been longing for some boating ever since last summer."

"It is very delightful, indeed!" returned Mildred, absently, her face flushing a deep red, for in the distance she described Rowland Ingram, who, by reason of his superior height, towered half a head above most of the men present.

Neither her confusion or its cause escaped the keen glance of Louise Pedley.

"Why, there is your husband's cousin!" she exclaimed. "Did he come here with you?"

Maud looked at her as if she would have said, "What's that to do with you?" but Mildred faltered a low affirmative. Unfortunately at this moment a lady sitting next her vacated her seat, which Miss Pedley instantly took possession of.

"I used to know Captain Ingram years ago," she remarked. "He was a very old friend of my father's, and as it happens I rather wanted to see him in order to make some inquiries concerning a mutual acquaintance who was in the same regiment in India."

So there was no chance of averting the meeting. Mildred and Maud exchanged significant glances; then the former said, hurriedly,—

"May I ask a favour of you, Miss Pedley? You will doubtless think it a strange one, but some time I shall be able to explain it. I want you not to mention my name before Captain Ingram, or to give any sign of knowing who I am. Do you mind?"

"Certainly not. I am only too pleased to do anything to oblige you," returned the quondam nurse; but she flashed a glance of rapid inquiry at the speaker, as if she would fain know the motive for the request. Captain Ingram, to say the truth, neither looked nor felt particularly pleased to meet this daughter of his "old friend," whom he was surprised to find in conversation with the two girls on his return.

"It seems to be our lot to come across each other in an unforeseen manner," she exclaimed, gaily, as she gave him her daintily gloved hand. "Is it fate, do you think?"

"He had not thought anything at all about it; but this he could hardly tell her, and she rattled on as fluently and blithely as Maud herself could have done, somewhat to the indignation of that young damsel, who was not inclined to tolerate a rival in her own especial domain.

"Give me your address," she said to Mildred, when at length she rose to take leave. "I should like to call and see you next week if I should happen to be anywhere near."

Lady Ingram complied, and breathed a sigh of relief when the green sateen and red roses vanished in the crowd. She had not quite got over her old antipathy for Miss Pedley even yet, although she had more than once called herself to account pretty severely for her injudicious—forgetting that instinct is almost invariably stronger than reason.

After leaving Burlington House the trio went into the park, and sat for an hour under the trees, watching the gay stream of fashion as it was borne along, and afterwards adjourned to a restaurant in Regent-street, where they met Mr. Denver, and all had dinner together. Then came the drive to Waterloo Station, and journey by train home.

"Captain Ingram," said Maud, as she was walking by his side, while her father and Mildred followed behind, "is Miss Pedley a friend of yours?"

He looked slightly embarrassed.

"A friend! No—not exactly that. I saw a good deal of her once, many years ago."

"And you were intimate with her?"

"Yes—in a measure."

"Ah!"

There is a good deal capable of being expressed even in a monosyllable, and that one of Maud's spoke volumes.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS PEDLEY kept her word, and two days after the meeting at the Academy made her

appearance at the cottage, just as Maud was preparing at a dainty little china equipage, from which she was dispensing five o'clock tea. Mr. Denver happened to be at home at the time, and to him the uninvited guest made herself so agreeable that he begged her to stay to dinner.

"But I should be so late getting home," she objected, hesitating.

"You might remain all night, for that matter; we have a spare bedroom, which is very much at your service."

Miss Pedley glanced at Maud, who could do no less than second the invitation, and upon that a telegram was despatched to the aunt with whom the ex-nurse was staying, telling her not to expect her niece till the next day.

"So kind of you!" murmured Miss Pedley, as she took off her bonnet in Maud's room, and gave a few touches to the tangled locks on her forehead. "At my aunt's I never see any society whatever, and sometimes I feel as if the ennui and monotony would kill me before long."

"Have you quite given up your profession, then?" inquired Mildred, who was idly playing with the roses that intrusively thrust their heads through the open casement.

"Yes, for a time; the confinement and want of sleep did not suit me, and this aunt, who is now living at Baywater, came over from America just before I left Ingram Chase, and asked me to go and reside with her permanently. Such is my history."

When they got downstairs they found Captain Ingram there, and he was immediately taken possession of by Miss Pedley, who kept him by her side talking of "old times," and recalling various episodes to the officer's memory, which, to judge from appearances, he would rather have forgotten.

After dinner a walk was proposed, and they all went out into the road, which, at this time of the evening, was almost deserted. By some chance Mildred and Roland were together in front, she with a white fleecy shawl, wrapped hood-wise over her head; from out of the folds her face, with its dainty bloom, looked fairer than ever.

"I imagined, from what I heard and saw at the Chase, that there was no probability of Lady Ingram getting friendly with her husband's cousin," said Miss Pedley, softly, her eyes fixed with a curious interest on the couple in front, as she and Maud sauntered slowly after them. "As that time he seemed to have taken an actual dislike to her."

Maud said nothing, and she continued,—

"By the bye, I heard him addressing her as 'Miss Mildred'—is it possible he does not know who she is?"

A point-blank question like this there was no possibility of evading.

"That is the case," Maud admitted, reluctantly, "but her meeting with him here was quite accidental, and it was at my request she consented to keep her identity a secret. You see, he had imbibed an unreasonable prejudice against his cousin's widow, and we thought the only way to remove it was to let him become personally acquainted with her, after which we imagined an amicable arrangement regarding the property might be arrived at."

"How very romantic—why, it is quite a complicated plot! And when do you intend undeceiving him?"

"I don't know—soon I expect, but that, I suppose, we must let the progress of events determine. Would you like to go on the river? I'll pull you up with pleasure."

Miss Pedley acquiesced rather reluctantly, fancying this suggestion was merely a ruse for leaving Mildred and Ingram alone—as in effect it was. She had never taken her eyes off the unconscious couple, and the soldier's lover-like attitude, his attentive falsetto of Mildred's every wish, and the gaze of passionate admiration with which he regarded her, were quite sufficient to enlighten the watcher as to how the case really stood. Her two hands clenched themselves together until the nails absolutely cut into the flesh, but there was no change in the expression of her face, not even an increase of colour in her cheeks.

Mildred, seeing the two girls push off in the

boat, proposed joining them, but to this her companion objected.

"I never see you alone; it seems to me that you purposely avoid a *tête-à-tête*," he said. "Besides, I have something to say to you that could not be said before a third person."

She looked at him wonderingly with her lovely lustrous eyes, but no idea of his meaning flashed across her even yet. She was young for her age, in spite of the experiences she had passed through; and, more than this, the notion that Ingram was attracted by Maud had taken complete possession of her.

They were standing on a piece of green sward, to which the moonlight lent its peculiar sheeny taint, while below the placid river flowed on, each ripple gleaming like silver, and the broad lily leaves making dark patches of shadow upon its surface.

The air was soft and balmy, and full of subtle floating perfumes, and over all reigned a deep summer silence, broken only by the washing of the waves against the banks, and the distant sound of Maud's musical voice singing "In the Gloaming," as she plied her oars.

"Is not the night lovely?" Mildred said, after a slight pause. "One feels inclined to quote poetry as the only means of expressing a due tribute of appreciation."

"Or to follow Moore's example, and invoke the spirit of the scene," he added. "Don't you remember that bit in *Lalla Rookh* :—

"We call thee hither, entrancing power,
Spirit of love, spirit of bliss,
The holiest time is the moonlight hour,
And there never was moonlight so sweet as this!"

"There never was moonlight so sweet as this—at least, to me," Captain Ingram repeated.

"But surely you were accustomed to beautiful nights in the tropics."

"Yes—only then you were not there."

"I!"

She turned upon him a glance of half-startled inquiry, little thinking how lovely she looked with the white shawl falling back from her pretty tumbled hair, and her scarlet lips slightly parted in surprise.

He laid his hand gently on her bare arm, and every pulse in her body thrilled at the touch.

"Haven't you guessed my secret, Mildred? Don't you know that I love you, and the dearest wish of my heart is to make you my wife?"

"Your wife!"

She spoke the words in a whisper, but they were a revelation that she herself had never before suspected. Hitherto she had not stayed to think how it was time spent with him passed so quickly, why her heart beat at the sound of his footstep, or why the sunshine seemed less bright when he was away. Now it came upon her like a flash of light, and she knew that for weal or for woe, for time and for eternity, she loved him!

Other considerations came afterwards, but in that supreme moment they had no weight, and she did not attempt resistance when Captain Ingram caught her in his arms and showered his kisses on her lips.

"My love—my darling!" he said, his voice low and passionate. "You will marry me, Mildred!"

Then remembrance came, and she drew herself forcibly away, her face growing as white as a lily, and a shiver running through her whole frame. What would he say when he knew the truth, and learned that the girl he loved was identical with the one of whom he had said to Selwin,—

"If there were no other woman extant, if she were as beautiful as Helen, as rich as Croesus, she should never be my wife!"

Should she explain all now, and throw herself upon his mercy, or should she wait and then write to him? The face she turned towards him looked strangely white in the moonlight, and his heart sank with a sudden chill when he saw it.

"Mildred—speak quickly! don't keep me in suspense," he exclaimed, hoarsely; "can't you see that your silence is agony to me?"

He put both hands on her shoulders, and looked down into her eyes.

"Why are you so pale—have I startled you? Oh, darling, give me my answer now—at once!"

"I cannot!"

"Is it possible I have deceived myself in thinking you care for me, then?" he cried, hotly, and, pushing her away from him. "Have you been trifling with me, and are you as heartless a coquette as I once deemed the rest of your sex?"

Another moment, and rather than let him continue in such a belief, she would have confessed everything, but just then there came the sound of a boat's keel grating on the shingle, and Maud's merry laugh told she had returned. The opportunity was lost.

"Hush!" she said, hurriedly, "to-morrow morning I will give you an answer."

And with this he was forced to be content, for Miss Pedley advanced at that instant, uttering some trite remark concerning the fitness of the night; and with her presence was dissolved the spell of the moonlight silence, and the subtle charm that a sweeter alchemy than the moonlight had woven over the dewy landscape.

Mildred, too much agitated to join in the careless conversation of the others, went back to the cottage where Mr. Denver was smoking his solitary pipe in the garden. Maud presently followed her, guessing from her manner something of what had happened, and being too impatient to curb her anxiety to know what it really was. Thus Louise Pedley and Ingram were alone.

"This night reminds me of one nearly ten years ago, when you came to the Vicarage, and we stood looking at the brook," she said, softly, drawing a little nearer to him. "Do you remember it?"

"I remember a good many evenings spent at the Vicarage in a general sort of way, but hardly any one in particular."

"Women's memory of such matters is better than men's," with a little sigh.

"Do you think so?" he said, absently, looking not at her, but towards the cottage where he knew Mildred was, and she saw that as a matter of fact, he hardly heard what she was saying, so preoccupied was his attention.

"Roland!" she exclaimed, with sudden vehemence, and carried away by the excitement of the moment from her ordinary calm; "is it possible that, after what happened in the past, you can speak to me thus coldly? Is it possible that we—you and I—can be strangers, when ten years ago we were all in all to each other?"

She had no reason to complain of lack of attention on his part now. He turned and faced her, his dark eyes flashing, a smile of unutterable scorn on his lips.

"And you remind me of that miserable time! Verily a woman's heart is an incomprehensible thing, and far beyond my power to probe. I should have thought that the one great effort of your life would have been to bury that wretched episode in deepest oblivion. Surely the part you played in it was bad enough!"

"You have always taken too harsh a view of it—you were merciless in your judgment. After all, my greatest fault lay in loving you better than what you called truth."

"No," he said, sternly, "it was not for love of me that you acted as you did; you would have married that other man you were engaged to at the same time if you had been sure he would inherit his uncle's fortune; and directly you found that was not likely to be the case you threw him over as heartlessly as if he had been made of stone instead of flesh and blood. Luckily, I knew your treachery in time, and was saved from the consequences of a folly upon which I now look back with absolute disgust."

Hard words these, to be spoken to such overweening vanity as that of Louise Pedley!

"If women only knew what a wrong they do their sex when they act as you acted," he went on, less vehemently. "For years the very name of woman was to me a synonym for all that was low, and mean, and base. Now, thank Heaven! I see my error, for I have found one who is pure and true to her heart's core, who does not even

know the meaning of deceit, and whose soul is as clear and limpid as a well of crystal!"

She knew who he meant; she saw how his eyes softened in the sternness of their anger, and his whole countenance lighted up under the influence of the love that had become a part of his very being, and over her swept a wave of humiliation whose bitterness is indescribable.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHE turned upon him, almost fiercely. "You fool, you imbecile, to have been so easily tricked!" she cried out, unable to control herself, or to yield to the guidance of that prudence which she so rarely permitted to desert her. "Do you know who this ideal woman—this paragon of all the virtues—is?"

He looked at her in astonishment, not unmixed with disgust at such unfeminine language and demeanour, but he did not reply.

"You are speaking of her who has just left us, and whom you know under the name of Mildred Denver," she continued, with unabated excitement. "What if I should tell you she has fooled you more completely than you were ever in your life fooled, that she has deceived you in every way. As to her antecedents, her name, her character—that she is, in effect, a married woman?"

"You are mad," he said, contemptuously, turning on his heel, and walking towards the cottage.

"No, I am sane enough, it is you who have been beguiled of your senses. Stay, you shall hear me," she laid her hand on his sleeve, "for what I have to say is the truth, and I am willing to vouch for it before all the world. Why, with a mocking laugh, "she even wears a wedding-ring, only you have been too blinded by your infatuation to see it."

"It was her mother's," Maud Denver told me

no."

"It may have been her mother's, but it was nevertheless placed on her finger by her husband. Shall I tell you who that husband was—your own cousin, Sir Rupert Ingram?"

If the earth had suddenly opened in front of him he could not have started back in greater horror and surprise. After a moment's silence he broke into an incredulous laugh. "What will you say next, I wonder!"

"I tell you Heaven's own truth. This woman is Mildred, Lady Ingram, and if you will confront me with her I will challenge her to deny it. Ask her, too, whether, when I met her at the Academy she did not implore me to keep silence regarding her identity, so as not to let you suspect who she was."

There was a certain ring of sincerity in Miss Pedley's voice that vouched for the veracity of her words, and the chill of an icy hand seemed to fall on her listener's heart as he recognized it.

"Well," he said, rather unsteadily, "it is easy enough to put your accusation to the proof. Come indoors at once, and repeat it before Mildred and the Denvers, and then we shall see the result."

She obliged without hesitation. Her anger had hurried her into a course of action that she certainly had not the intention of pursuing in this precipitate manner, but having once begun she had no alternative but to go on, and make the best of her position.

"Where is Miss Mildred?" Ingram inquired of Mr. Denver when they reached the cottage.

"Upstairs with Maud, I believe. Do you want her?"

"For a few minutes! Please say I won't detain her long."

Mr. Denver went out to send a servant with the request, and Roland Ingram took up his station near the window, a terrible shadow on his face. What if this charge should be true, and the woman he loved proved his cousin's widow!

"But why should she assume this disguise—what motive could she possibly have for wishing to deceive me?" he muttered, unconscious in his agitation that he was speaking aloud.

(To be continued.)

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	<p>INVALUABLE FOR LADIES.</p>

SEA LIONS, seals, walrus, and pelicans are fed on fish when in captivity; monkeys, young lions, and hippopotami drink milk—a full-grown hippopotamus will absorb fifteen quarts of milk in a day. Polar bears live on bread; monkeys like fruit as well as milk; snakes require rabbits, chickens, and ducks. A kangaroo eats nearly 200 pounds of bread a week.

STATE DINNERS IN CHINA—Curious, almost comical, are these ceremonials. Tables are spread in an immense pavilion, lined by columns of jasper and adorned with bronzes and marble and tortoiseshell balustrades. In the background are two tables of figures, showing the ages of the sun and moon. When the guests have been seated, the doors are thrown open. Surrounded by his guard, the emperor walks to a low golden throne, and the Court makes a deep obeisance. One of the Court officials announces that the emperor has taken his seat by cracking a whip three times, and the orchestra, hidden behind bamboo plants, at once begins a festival march. After making nine prostrations and five genuflections, the officers entrusted with serving his Majesty at table bring in a little table set with precious stones, and serve him with tea, which is the first Chinese *cérémonie*. Then the costly table and the tables to be used by the guests are covered with silk, and the strange dishes peculiar to Chinese cookery are handed round. When the emperor is thirsty the scene is changed quickly. The chief cupbearer draws back his mantle embroidered with coats of arms, and presents the goblet on his knees; then, while the "Son of Heaven" raises it to his lips, all the guests must look towards the west. It is curious to learn that only the near relations of the emperor have the right of tasting the food, and the other guests have to consider that they have dined sufficiently from the simple fact of having been honoured by an invitation to see their emperor dine. In this respect a comical fact must be mentioned. The poultry displayed on the tables in background are made of cardboard or plaster of Paris, and are theatrical "properties." After dessert graceful dancers upon the terrace lighted by yellow lanterns, while invisible choirs drone what are supposed to be languishing melodies.

FACETIÆ

TEACHER: "What is an island?" Johnny: "A body of land entirely surrounded by war-ships."

TEACHER (suspiciously): "Who wrote your composition, Johnny?" Johnny: "My father." "What, all of it?" "No'm; I helped him."

"DAUGHTER, is your husband amiable?" "Well, ma, he's exactly like pa; when he gets his own way about everything he's lovely."

LAWYER: "You say the miser kept his gold in a strong box?" Friend: "Yes, sir. He kept it in an empty Limburger cheese-box."

"Will you marry me?" he asked. "That depends," replied the practical girl. "How can I know so early in the season that I won't have another chance?"

"Yes," said the lady who had been shipwrecked, "we suffered terrible hardships. We drifted for two weeks in an open boat, and I lost my pocket-mirror the first day."

OLD EDITOR: "Where is Scribbler?" Assistant: "Gone off to get married." Old Editor: "Well, I'm glad of that. He won't kick so about staying here nights now."

"THEY say a carrier pigeon will go further than any other bird," said the boarder, between bites. "Well, I'll have to try one," said the landlady. "I notice a fowl doesn't go far!"

GUEST: "I hear your husband is a spiritualist. Have you ever seen any sign of a spirit?" Housewifery Wife: "In my husband. Well, I should hope not!"

"WHILE I was abroad I witnessed a duel in France." "Anybody hurt?" "Yes; one of the principals had a rib broken embracing the other after the combat was over."

GRANDMOTHER: "But, child, be reasonable, and don't marry that shiftless young fellow." The Modern Girl: "Later on, grandma. The first time I marry for love only."

LITTLE ETHEL (at breakfast): "My egg is quite cold; is yours?" Little Tommy: "Yes. I wonder why it is?" Little Ethel: "I expect cook made a mistake and boiled them in cold water."

MISS FORBUNDER: "This fashion of having hired singers is just horrid, and I'm going to stop it. Mr. Niccetto has gone now." Mrs. F.: "Gone where?" Miss F.: "Gone and married one of the singers, same as the rest of 'em."

MAMMA: "Oh, I am terribly worried about Robbie." Papa: "What is wrong with him now; some simple, little ailment?" Mamma: "No; he has washed his face twice without being told."

"I'm afraid, Edward, you're marrying me only because I've inherited £10,000 from my uncle." "Way, Blanche, how can you think that of me? Your uncle is nothing to me. I would marry you, no matter from whom you inherited the money!"

MRS. D'AVNOC (at front window): "Officer!" Policeman: "Yes, ma'am. What's wrong, ma'am?" Mrs. D'Avnoco: "Nothing's wrong; but I wish you'd step into the kitchen and tell the cook not to burn the meat, as she did last night. I'm afraid to."

"That fellow," he said, "always seems to come when he isn't wanted." "Who doesn't want him, Mr. Brown?" she asked; and after less than a minute of thought he reached the conclusion that possibly he had made a mistake as to who was not wanted.

ANXIOUS FRIEND: "Mercy! what's the matter?" Star Actress: "Boo-hoo! Oh, that manager is too mean, he's trying to ruin my reputation." "The brute! How?" "I refused to play in a new part, and he—boo-hoo—he hasn't sued me for damages at all."

THE JUDGE sentenced a culprit to twenty years' penal servitude. This fact was communicated to the prisoner's mother, who was struck at the magnitude of the sentence. "What did they do that for?" she exclaimed. "Twenty years! why he won't be contented there three weeks."

THESE: "How's your club getting along?" Jess: "Oh, we're getting a big membership now since we reduced the initiation fee." "I told you one pound was too much to expect any woman to pay." "Yes, we realised that, so we made it nineteen shillings and sixpence."

PLAYWRIGHT: "Talk about realism, I've hit it now. You can re-open your theatre next week." Manager: "Such weather as this! The theatre is like an oven." Playwright: "That's all right. I've laid the scene in South Africa, and there are several hot scenes descriptive of the Boer war."

EDWINA: "How is Mr. Blushman getting along? Has he proposed yet?" Edith: "No; but he's improving. The first night he called he held the album in his hands all the evening; the second night he had my pug dog in his arms; last night he held Willie on his lap for an hour. I have hopes."

RAILROAD SUPERINTENDENT (climbing on to the engine): "That bridge ahead is very weak, but by putting on all steam I think the train can pass it." Engineer: "All right; but if I were in your place, I'd take a seat in the last car." Superintendent: "Oh! Oh, I'm going to get off."

"I WANT to stop in front of this window," said Mr. Riktna. "Why, it's full of millinery!" exclaimed his wife. "I didn't know you admired such things." "I not only admire, I marvel. I take off my hat to genius, and the people who can get five pounds apiece for a lot of bunches of odds and ends like those are qualified to give lessons to a Napoleon of finance."

"DON'T you know you are a very presuming young fellow?" inquired the stern parent of the trembling applicant for his daughter's hand. "I admit the presumption, sir." "I think," continued the parent of the beloved one, in his most sarcastic tones, "that in your youthful carelessness you must have quite overlooked the fact that I am her father." "I tried to overlook it, sir," stammered the youth.

"How did you get into Miss Overage's good graces so quickly, Tom?" "I told her I never dreamed she was more than eighteen." "How could you lie so! You know she must be nearly fifty." "Twas the truth. I never dreamed about her at all."

WATTS: "You won't mind my leaving my bike here in your office, will you? I know you don't ride one, but—" Potts: "No, I don't ride one very well, but I began taking lessons yesterday." Watts: "Er—come to think of it, I don't think I'll impose on your good nature, old man."

CLARA (haughtily): "I went to the theatre every night last week and had a different escort each time." Rival Belle (vindictively): "You should be more cautious, my dear." "Cautious!" "Yes, my dear. Ill-natured people all over town are saying you can't get the same man to go with you twice."

THE thief had been caught red-handed, but he feigned innocence, nevertheless. "Ha!" exclaimed the policeman, "you're about again, eh? I thought they had put you in prison!" "No. The judge said he would give me another trial." "Oh, he did! Come along then; we'll let him keep his word!"

MAMMA was serving jam-pudding. "Johnny, will you take a little pudding?" Johnny: "Yes; will you give me the ends, please?" Mamma: "But why do you wish to have the ends, Johnny?" Johnny: "Why, when I was in the kitchen, I heard Ellen say to cook, 'Put a good lot of jam in the ends, cook, because you know the ends are always left for us.'"

SUE (who has just been asked to play something on the piano): "I really can't play anything." Tommy: "But I say, Sue, why don't you play that piece you spoke to me about?" Sue: "What piece?" Tommy: "Why that one you told me to ask you to play when we had company 'cause you knew it better'n any of the others. I forgot the name." Then Tommy was sent to bed.

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SOCIETY.

PRINCE AND PRINCESS HENRY OF PRUSSIA are coming to England later on, but it is not yet settled whether they are to visit the Queen at Osborne in August or at Balmoral in September.

THE Prince of Wales will visit the Queen at Balmoral, and the Duke and Duchess of Fife at Mar Lodge during the autumn. His Royal Highness will be with Her Majesty for the visit of the Shah, and also for that of the German Emperor, should his Majesty decide to come, as it is hoped that he will.

THE Braemar Gathering was to have been held this year at Balmoral during the first week of September, in one of the Queen's grass parks on the banks of the Dee; but Her Majesty has countermanded the function on account of the war, so that the occupants of Deeside country houses and shooting-lodges will be deprived for this season of the great social event of the autumn in that district.

THE Prince of Wales and the Duke of York are to be guests in September of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Sassoon at Tulehan Lodge, Morayshire. Mr. Sassoon leases the Tulehan and Advie grouse-moors from Lady Seafield, and his tenancy includes a stretch of salmon-fishing in the Spey, which flows near the shooting-lodge, which is beautifully situated a few miles from Grantown.

PERKIN is, at the best of times, a most miserable place of residence for Europeans. It is wholly lacking in the civilisation of Hong Kong or Japanese cities. Indeed, as a residential quarter, the capital of Afghanistan, could give it some points. It is indescribably filthy; it has no streets, as we understand them, no lighting after dark; its odours are foul, and its native inhabitants are ill to live with.

THE Queen adheres to the old plan of hereditary succession in the choice of servants as far as possible. If a Royal coachman gets married and has a family, his sons, if well-conditioned, are taken, when old enough, into the stables, and rise through the various grades to better positions. The daughters, too, find employment indoors with some branch of the Royal Family.

THE little Princess Victoria of Germany is said to have a decided will of her own, and sometimes takes a fancy to stand up in the Royal carriage when she is driving in Berlin with one of her ladies-in-waiting. The decorous lady-in-waiting will implore her to sit down, but the little Princess will get up again, like a little Jack-in-the-box. If the fancy takes her to do so. She is a very warm-hearted little child, however, and can easily be ruled through her affections. It is no wonder if she is a little spoilt—the one girl in a family of seven.

THE visit of the German Crown Prince to the Queen will take place either during Her Majesty's residence at Osborne or at Balmoral in the autumn. The Crown Prince will be invested by the Queen with the ribbon and insignia of the Order of the Garter during his stay in England, and he may very likely pay a brief visit to the Duke and Duchess of Connaught in Ireland. The Crown Prince would probably prefer to visit the Queen at Balmoral, as he is a fine shot, and is anxious to try his hand at deer-stalking in the Royal Forests.

THE King of Portugal was to have been the guest of the Queen at Osborne this month, his Majesty having intended to visit Cowes during the regatta week, after his stay in Paris; but he has been obliged to change his plans, as he will not be able to leave Lisbon until the beginning of September. The King of Portugal will come to England after his visit to Paris, and is to be the guest of the Queen at Balmoral for a few days, when he will have some deer-shooting in the Royal Forest on Deeside, and probably the Duke of Fife will entertain his Majesty with a deer drive in Mar Forest. The King of Portugal is related to our Royal Family, his grandfather, the King Consort Ferdinand, having been a first cousin of the Queen and of Prince Albert.

STATISTICS.

ONLY five per cent. of the people insured in England are women. Over ten per cent. of those insured in the United States are females.

QUEEN VICTORIA is Sovereign over one continent, 100 peninsulas, 500 promontories, 1,000 lakes, 3,000 rivers, and 10,000 islands.

BRITISH farmers and dairymen are to-day milking over 4,000,000 cows, and producing annually in their dairies £32,000,000 worth of milk, butter, and cheese.

LIVERPOOL is the greatest English distributing point for American apples, and as many as 100,000 barrels of apples have been sold there in one week at remunerative prices.

THE common hen lays about 500 or 600 eggs in ten years. In the first year the number is only ten to twenty; in the second, third, and fourth, 100 to 185 each; whence it again diminishes to ten in the last year.

GEMS.

THE only failure a man ought to fear is failure in cleaving to the purpose he seems to be best.

It is only as a man puts off all foreign support and stands alone that he can be strong and prevail.

ORDER is the sanity of the mind, the health of the body, the peace of the city, the security of the State. As the beams of a house, so is order to all things.

COMMON sense is, of all kinds the most uncommon. It implies good judgment, sound discretion, and true and practical wisdom applied to common life.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SPARKLING LEMONADE.—Slice six large lemons and remove the pits. Sprinkle over them two teaspoonfuls of castor sugar, and let them stand fifteen minutes. Add three quarts of cold water and some lumps of ice, stir well, and leave for an hour, then strain and serve. To make it sparkle, put a pinch of carbonate of soda in each glass.

LEMON SYRUP.—Grate the rind of six lemons with lumps of sugar, squeeze and strain their juice. To a pint of juice add a pint of water, and three and a half pounds of sugar, besides what was rubbed on the lemons. Place in an enamelled pan, and when the sugar is dissolved over a gentle heat the syrup may be bottled for use.

QUICKLY-MADE GINGER BEER.—Bruise two ounces of Jamaica ginger with a mallet or rolling-pin. Put it in a large vessel with a pound and a half of lump sugar and the rind of three lemons. Pour over a full gallon of boiling water. Cover the vessel and allow it to stand till lukewarm. Now add the juice of three lemons, and a tablespoonful of yeast. Allow it to ferment about twelve hours. It may then be strained and bottled, and will be fit for drinking in twenty-four hours. If not liked very strong use less ginger.

BRAIN SOUFFLE.—When the brains have been carefully prepared, put them in a saucepan with three tablespoonfuls of vinegar and a little salt. Cook slowly for ten minutes, drop in cold water; when cold, dry and chop into small pieces. In another saucepan mix one heaping tablespoonful of butter with one of flour, and add one cupful of milk; season with salt, pepper, and a little onion juice. Stir in the brains, and when hot add the yolks of two eggs. Take from stove and allow to cool. Beat the whites of two eggs, and stir them in lightly, pour in a baking-dish, and bake fifteen minutes in a quick oven.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE pouch of a pelican is large enough to hold seven quarts of water.

THE life of an Australian native rarely exceeds fifty years.

THE deserts of Arabia are specially remarkable for the pillars of sand which are raised by the whirlwinds.

THE only two great European capitals that never have been occupied by a foreign foe are London and St. Petersburg.

THE men in Japan do most of the sewing, and they push the needle in and out in a direction from them instead of towards them.

IN Paraguay cotton grows the whole year round, and from one planting two crops are produced. The plant, after it has borne, is cut down, and from its root grows another plant.

A NATIVE MADE rifle of one inch calibre, and so heavy that two men are required to use it, is a favourite weapon with the Chinese. It is nine feet in length.

AN Amsterdam lapidary has a machine which can pierce a hole as small as one one-thousandth of an inch in diameter. The holes are made in diamonds, sapphires, and rubies.

WOOD-PULP cotton is made from whitewood which has been macerated with chemicals until it can be drawn into a thread. The threads so produced can be readily woven, and it is said that cotton-duck made from them can be readily washed.

COMPETENT authorities assert that South America has greater undeveloped resources than any other portion of the world. Any crop grown elsewhere can be duplicated there, and the country abounds in mines of coal, silver, and gold, most of which have been only slightly developed.

THE Nile is unique among great rivers in that it is largest towards its source. But this is due to the fact that it traverses a desert region beneath a semi-tropical sun, and that one-third of its volume below the first cataract is diverted from its channel for purposes of irrigation and domestic use.

CHINA has still the old-fashioned system of private letter-carrying. Letter shops are to be found in every town. If he has a letter to send, the Chinese goes to a letter-shop and bargains with the keeper thereof. He pays two-thirds of the cost, leaving the receiver to pay the rest on delivery.

THE smallest republic in the world is the little community of Ganot, comprising 140 souls, who exist on the flat top of the Pyrenees. This miniature republic is only one mile in area, has existed since 1648 and is recognised by both France and Spain. It has a council of twelve, who elect their President.

HOUSEKEEPING among the Filipinos is a simple matter, reducing the housewife's cares to the minimum. A few braided mats of palm leaf, a tiny store of red clay, over which her pot of chocolate may be boiled, four or five pots, a broom of twigs with curved handle, a low wooden tub, a chocolate mudler to keep the chocolate from burning, a loom for her weaving, a spilt-hammock to hold baby in, and two or three baskets and stools of wickerwork complete the list of essential furnishings. Outside the bamboo hut—which stands on spindling legs like a farmer's corncrib—there is usually a tiny garden of luxuriant gourds and flourishing castor beans, a banana tree and a few roving fowls. The Filipino women, like the men, can put in a large amount of time simply existing. The women are never expected to do hard out-of-door work, the men in many instances even doing the work that is usually given over to the woman. After they have been busy all day in the fields they are quite willing to come home and pound the rice for the women to cook for supper. The women are exceptionally clever with their fingers, and weave and embroider the most delicate fabrics.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

HALL.—Apply to the Secretary at the Crystal Palace.

GRANT.—The information can be gained at the Horse Guards.

L. C.—He ought to take your name, but he can do as he pleases.

RAINF.—You may sue for the money as a debt in the County Court.

INQUIRY.—The increased income-tax came into operation on April 7th.

EXPERIENCED.—We know of no special proceeding. Ask a Customs officer.

RAY.—The Queen's name is Alexandra Victoria—that and nothing more.

CONVICT READER.—As it was an accident, you cannot be held responsible.

A. F.—England is the first naval Power in the world, and France comes next.

IGNORANT.—Major-general is the rank next above colonel in the British Army.

L. M. B.—Write to the head master or manager, who will give you all particulars.

T. R.—The husband takes all his deceased wife's property if she made no will.

A. G.—Your father can by will give his heritable property to any one he thinks fit, either in or out of the family.

GRAMMAR.—The name "grammar" school originally implied a school at which the Latin grammar was taught.

HALL.—An engineer must serve for two years on board before he can go up to the examination for second certificate.

GRASSON.—It is necessary that you should call in order to realise the actual meaning and value of what you have learnt.

F. M.—A contract of apprenticeship is terminated by the death of the master, unless the apprentice is willing to serve the new master.

DISAPPOINTED.—The linen was probably too wet; it should be only slightly damp; experience will soon teach you the proper degree.

UNHAPPY SPIRIT.—You have no cause for unhappiness. While hair is really very becoming to a young face, and generally gives it rather a distinguished appearance.

R. A.—Sartor is Latin for tailor, and resartus means repaired or reshot. So we may take the wide translation of "Sartor Resartus" as "a rejuvenated tailor."

MIRIAM.—The engagement-ring is worn on the third finger of the left hand by girls, until the wedding-ring takes its place, and the engagement-ring acts as its keeper.

COURTESY.—The words "By Her Majesty's Royal letters patent" are used by tradesmen and others to signify that they have been specially appointed to supply goods to the Queen.

V. H.—As to when a widow should marry again is a matter of taste and circumstances; but the general opinion of society is that a whole year should elapse before a second marriage is contracted.

OTHELLO.—Do not let your disappointment make you bitter; it will not do that if your love is the right kind. Bitter remarks and cheap cynicisms have their rise in wounded vanity, not disappointed affection.

ART.—To remove marking-ink from linen, paint the mark with a solution of cyanide of potassium, applied with a camel's hair brush. As soon as the ink disappears the linen should be rinsed in cold water.

HAIR.—Have you tried doing a few simple calisthenic exercises before getting into bed? Five minutes spent in this way, and a little cold cream well massaged in every night will soon remedy a "saggy" look.

J. J. F.—They need an occasional washing with soap and water. After drying, give a final rub with tissue paper and powdered whitening or prepared chalk. Glasses that are dim are likely to injure the sight.

OLD READER.—The Orange Free State and Transvaal stamps without the lettered "V.F.S." printed on the face are of little or no value, as they have been in use for a number of years, and are therefore fairly plentiful.

A. C.—When an engagement of marriage is broken off, it is customary for each party to return to the other all letters which have passed between them, also photographs and rings which they have exchanged.

A. M.—If the girl was engaged on the distinct understanding that engagement was to be a weekly one, a week's notice is sufficient; but the fact that her wages are paid weekly does not necessarily affect the point.

MAY.—Perform a funeral rag over the stump of an old broom, wet in warm water, and go over the floor once a week. Wipe the floor perfectly dry and rub it well with skim milk. This will give it the lustre of a fresh covering.

MARSH.—Lemon-juice is useful to remove stains from the fingers, but if used too frequently it hardens and wrinkles the skin. Mixed with glycerine in equal proportions it is good to rub into the hands—a little at a time—after washing them.

G. R.—The grandmother may refuse to give up to the father; the child she has maintained reared by him for nine years, and should he threaten force, she can intimate her intention to apply to the court.

LINT.—To cleanse the hair without washing it brush with a clean, wet brush. It is astonishing what dirt can be removed in this way. An old brush should be kept for the purpose, as it constantly requires washing.

ASHES.—Apply a little of the best carriage varnish to the edges of the china to be mended, and then press the fractured parts together. When the varnish is dry the fracture will be hardly perceptible, and the china will stand fire and water.

MAG.—There are numerous remedies recommended for the removal of freckles. The following is an efficacious way: Powdered alum and fresh-lemon-juice, one ounce each, in one pint of rose-water. It should be applied at least three times a day.

PAPERED.—Soak blotting-paper in a mixture of equal parts of oil of camphor and spirits of turpentine, and lay the paper under the carpet and underneath the various pieces of furniture. This is said to be an infallible remedy for the destruction of moths.

MAR.—If it is real marble mix a little pumice mud—that is the finest powdered pumice made—with vinegar, wash the surface with the mixture and leave it on for several hours, then rub hard and wash off when dry, rub with whitening and wash-leather to get up the polish.

C. C.—The Queen could declare war independent of Parliament, but as the Army could not be put in the field without supplies, and the House of Commons alone can grant the money necessary for these, the Queen would be unable to do anything actually without first coming to the Commons for consent.

THROUGH FIELDS OF EGLANTINE.

One in our love, but two to live our lives

Not hand in hand through fields of eglantine

Our footsteps stray; by parted paths

Striving by rocky heights, by parted paths

We break our way,

One in our love, but two to live our lives.

Not hand in hand through fields of eglantine

Till ends the day of toil; then we compare

The heights attained,

With opened hearts confess each backward step,

Each vantage gained,

One in our love, but two to live our lives.

Our footsteps stray so rarely in those fields;

We turn with gentle wonderment to see

How others fare,

Content to stay in fields of eglantine,

If wandering there,

One in their love, and one to live their lives.

Striving toward rocky heights by parted paths,

We know two lives, one love, in closer bonds

Than hand in hand,

And yet, these fields of eglantine, how fair they lie!

Where two may stand,

One in their love, and one to live their lives.

PRINTED ORN.—The printed forms used in the Army for different purposes have, for the guidance of those who use them, the name "Thomas Atkins" printed to indicate to those using them where to write their names. Since this form has been in use our soldiers have been generally termed "Tommy Atkins."

OLD SUBSCRIBER.—In the first case the words "by Her Majesty's Royal letters patent" simply mean that the manufacturer holds a patent for some process in his machinery. In the second case the use of the Royal arms signifies that the person using it has received special permission to do so, he having supplied goods to Her Majesty.

F. H.—It is probably largely owing to their habit of having the head constantly covered, and no doubt partly due to climatic influences also; if you abandoned cap in moderate latitudes the scalp would most likely become active again; as for applications there is nothing better than pure paraffin oil, or glee, in every plat of which a cut up onion has been kept.

DOLLY.—One quart of sweet cream, and one quart of milk, beat thoroughly with a pound of sugar; add, for vanilla cream, the whites of four eggs; for lemon or strawberry, the whole of four eggs thoroughly beaten together; flavour with extract of vanilla, lemon, or strawberry to suit the taste; place it in the freezer, and keep constantly in motion while freezing.

S. P.—Select only those which are small, white and firm. Peel and put them in a dish of boiling water and set over the fire and wait until they become quite clear. Then take them out, and while hot lay between two cloths to dry. Roll vinegar with some cloves, ginger and whole pepper, pour it over them in jars, and tie closely.

G. R.—You should cease trying to sing for the present; if you persist you may permanently injure your voice. Give yourself a complete rest for a little while, and then try occasionally, and when you find your vocal organs are once more under your command you should begin by practising easy scales daily, never going higher or lower than you can reach with ease.

W. B.—Writer's cramp is a peculiar kind of local spasm, in which every attempt to write calls forth uncontrollable movements in the thumb, index and middle fingers, so that instead of legible handwriting, a mere scrawl appears. The sensations are chiefly that of weight and constriction of the hand, with pain extending occasionally from the upper arm to the back. The disease is usually confined to middle age and rarely occurs in women.

S. S.—The garment must first be ripped apart and brushed. Spread an old sheet over a large flat board, take half a cup of ox-gall, half a cup of ammonia, and half a pint of tepid soft water. Sponge the silk with this on both sides, especially the soiled spots, then roll it on a round stick, like a broom-handle, being careful not to make any wrinkles. Silk thus washed and thoroughly dried needs no ironing, and has a lustre like new silk.

PATTIE.—Keep them in a dry but cool place, and above all be careful that when put away no moths or, worse still, moth's eggs can get away with them. Each piece should be well sprinkled with a mixture of pounded camphor and freshly ground pepper, then wrapped up in a separate piece of paper; some use newspapers, others prefer brown paper. If you have a cedar chest, that is the best thing you can put them in. Whether you store away in chests or drawers, let there be a plentiful sprinkling of pounded camphor and ground pepper below and between every layer.

CHERRY RICE.—Choose some small apples of an equal size; remove the cores, peel them, and let them boil in water acidulated with lemon-juice or citric acid and sweetened. Do not let them boil too fast, or the apples will break. Keep them covered. Drain when they are soft, place in a basin, and pour a little syrup over them and let them cool. Well coat them with apricot or apple marmalade, and decorate on the top with angelica cut into rounds. Fill the centre of the apples with preserved cherries and fruit jelly, and dish in a group, with slips of angelica cut to represent leaves, and placed round the dish.

A. M.—The origin of the term "showing the white feather" to mean being guilty of cowardice, probably comes from cock-fighting. No gamecock has a white feather. A white feather indicates a cross-breed in these birds. It is curious how many phrases the old brutal sports of our ancestors have originated. We see the term "come up to the scratch" every day without thinking that it refers to the pugilist, who, at the call of time, has to come up from his corner to the middle of the ring to face his opponent. "To face the music" also is a pugilistic simile, but it only belongs to a far more recent period.

BLANCHÉ.—Pound one pound of blanched sweet almonds and eight or nine bitter ones in a mortar. They should be done four or five at a time, adding, every few almonds, a few drops of water to prevent their boiling; add to them one pound of sifted sugar and the whites of four eggs, and whisk all to a froth. When all are thoroughly blended, lay the icing on the cake, which should be well baked and quite cold, as evenly as possible to the thickness of about half an inch. Put the cake into a cool oven till the mixture is dry, and add the sugar icing afterward. Another method is the following: Six ounces of almonds, six ounces of icing sugar, one tablespoonful of vanilla or flavour of some kind. Blanch, chop and pound the almonds, and put the whole into a small saucepan, and just let it heat slightly till it will stick together, and spread it on the cake.

CRUST.—Line a pie plate or shallow pudding dish with the pie crust; then fill the dish with berries, and sprinkle over them powdered sugar. Roll pie crust out a little thicker than for an upper crust of a pie, spread over the berries, leaving the crust a little larger than the dish, and do not press down the edge. Bake in a moderate oven. Meanwhile make a custard by placing a cup of cream or rich milk over the fire in a double boiler, and when it comes to the boiling point, stirring in half a teaspoonful of corn starch, milked with a little cold milk, and one tablespoonful of sugar. Beat light the whites of two eggs and add to the mixture; cook a moment before taking from the fire. Stand the dish containing the custard in a pan of cold water and stir until the custard is cold. When the pie is baked, carefully remove the top crust and pour the cold custard over the fruit; replace the crust and allow the pie to become cool before serving.

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